GURPS® Fourth Edition

BANESTORM™

By Phil Masters and Jonathan Woodward

STEVE JACKSON GAMES

GURPS® Fourth Edition

BANESTORM™

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Phil Masters: To my players of the last 25 years, who suffered while I learned. *Jonathan Woodward:* To Annie Webber, ever a shelter from the storm.

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About *GURPS*

Steve Jackson Games is committed to full support of the ***GURPS*** system. Our address is SJ Games, P.O. Box 18957, Austin, TX 78760. Please include a self-addressed, stamped envelope (SASE) any time you write us! We can also be reached by e-mail: **info@sjgames.com**. Resources include:

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Rules and statistics in this book are specifically for the ***GURPS Basic Set,*** *Fourth Edition.* Page references that begin with B refer to that book, not this one.

Introduction

This world to me is like a lasting storm . . .

– William Shakespeare, ***Pericles***

Welcome to Yrth – the world of the Banestorm. Here humanity and a dozen other races, orphans and authors of the storm alike, wield swords and spells in a struggle for survival and glory. Although trolls and dragons lurk in the dark places, the worst dangers of all may be found in the verdant forests and great palaces . . .

About This Book

GURPS Banestorm is a guide to fantasy RPG adventures on the world of Yrth, particularly the continent of Ytarria. Yrth largely resembles our own world save that magic works there and none of its original sapient or semi-intelligent races are human. However, an ancient dimensional vortex known as the Banestorm has periodically transplanted humans and others to Ytarria from Earth . . . and elsewhere.

This book is a supplement for ***GURPS*** *Fourth Edition,* and Yrth-based games can be run with nothing more than this and the two volumes of the ***GURPS Basic Set.*** However, many gamers may wish to mine the extensive list of spells and rule guidelines in ***GURPS Magic*** as well as the general campaign concerns found in ***GURPS Fantasy***.

Most of ***GURPS Banestorm*** is intended to be read by both GMs and players. However, GMs may ask players not to read Chapter 3, which details Ytarria's cultures; there *are* one or two secrets revealed there. On the other hand, some GMs might prefer to treat some of what's said there as old wives' tales, uncorroborated rumors, or complete falsehoods, just to keep players who "cheat" uncertain and off-balance. We definitely encourage such stratagems. Chapter 6 is mostly aimed at GMs but provides suggestions and outlines rather than details. Players may find this section useful when constructing their characters' backgrounds.

Publication History

The ***GURPS*** fantasy world of Yrth is actually older than ***GURPS*** itself. It first appeared in 1985 as the setting for ***Orcslayer***, by Warren Spector and Steve Jackson; this adventure focused on the region of Caithness and worked with the core combat system for ***GURPS***, published the following year.

In 1986, a larger world-rendering appeared in the first edition of ***GURPS Fantasy***, by Steve Jackson. A general guide to running fantasy games in ***GURPS,*** it also outlined Yrth as a sample setting, still focusing on Caithness. That land reappeared in 1988 as the location for Aaron Allston and J. David George's ***GURPS Fantasy: Harkwood,*** a campaign setting and scenario based on a feudal fief. In 1989, Alexander von Thorn's ***GURPS Fantasy: Tredroy*** looked at the "City of Three Laws." Kirk Tate and Janet Naylor wrote a completely new 1990 edition titled ***GURPS Fantasy: The Magical World of Yrth***, which plumbed the mysteries of Ytarria even further.

Yrth was the official "default" setting for ***GURPS*** fantasy games, but after 1990 it was only lightly developed, notably in the 1991 anthology ***GURPS Fantasy Adventures***, which featured scenarios by Chris W. McCubbin, David Dunham, Walter Milliken, and David L. Pulver. *Pyramid* authors continued to discuss Yrth; it also received passing mentions in various "generic" fantasy-oriented ***GURPS*** supplements over the years.

This book returns to Yrth, advancing its history 15 years from its last substantial depiction and bringing game mechanics in line with ***GURPS*** *Fourth Edition.* We've broadened the general scope in some spots, explored more detail in others – and taken the opportunity to change a few things.

Ytarria

This book, like its predecessors, focuses on the continent of Ytarria. Located in Yrth's northern hemisphere, Ytarria spans roughly 3,000 miles. Local climes range from parched deserts and subtropical forests in the south to chilly subarctic regions in the north. Humans have settled a number of outlying islands but maintain contact with mainland cultures. Some nonhuman races dwell under the waves themselves.

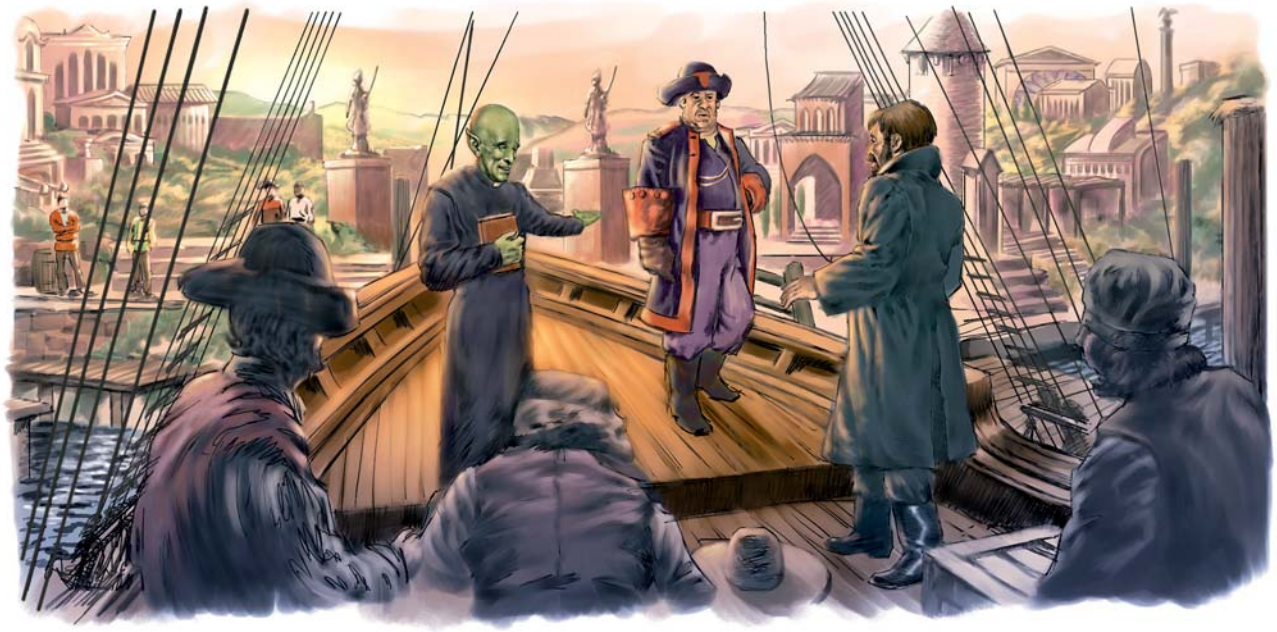
Although other continents exist on Yrth, ocean travel is difficult. Ships are likely to be beset by powerful currents, wild storms, monsters, and supernatural strangeness. GMs may view the lack of development of Ytarria's neighbors as an invitation to design and populate these places themselves; however, ***GURPS Banestorm*** is explicitly written to provide plenty of adventuring opportunities as it stands.

About the Authors

Phil Masters has been playing RPGs since 1978; his first professional writing appeared in 1980, his first RPG book in 1990, and his first work for Steve Jackson Games (***GURPS Arabian Nights***) in 1993. Since then, he's worked on many more ***GURPS*** books, including the ***Discworld*** and ***Hellboy*** RPGs (the latter also with Jonathan Woodward). He's also written for White Wolf, Guardians of Order, and Eden Studios, among others. He lives in the U.K., runs a biweekly game, and sometimes helps organize RPG conventions.

Jonathan Woodward, a freelance writer and computer professional, is the author or co-author of ***GURPS Ogre, GURPS Magic Items 3,*** the ***Hellboy Sourcebook and Roleplaying Game,*** and ***Transhuman Space: In The Well,*** all for Steve Jackson Games. He has also co-authored several books for White Wolf Publishing. In addition to roleplaying, he collects books and deconstructs maps. He lives in Massachusetts, with a summer home in Sahud.

Chapter One
History



*Harry Williamson, skipper of the **Saint Martha**, was a worried man. His ship had survived the storm that had blown out of nowhere last night, though she'd come horribly close to losing her mainsail, running before those crazed winds. But storms were part of life; it was everything **since** that was giving him cold sweats. The day was far too warm, the coastline was all **wrong**, and now . . . Harry knew every inch of the Channel and all down to Spain, but this fine little town, the first they'd sighted, was new to him. Some of the buildings on the hills were definitely marble, and that made no sense at all.*

The port-folk had evidently decided there was something curious about the ship, too, and a heavy-set fellow in unfamiliar livery scrambled aboard at the first opportunity. He had "sergeant" written all over him. Recognizing Harry as the skipper, he approached. "Who be thee?" His English had an odd accent.

*"The **Saint Martha**," Harry answered, "Out of London."*

The sergeant's brow furrowed. "Ah, my ol' grandad spoke of that. In Ingulland, wasn't it?"

*Harry nodded dumbly, and the sergeant nodded back, looking sympathetic. "So that **was** a Banestorm last night, then," he observed. "Father Hermann said it might be, though most folks thought the last of those had blown 'emselves out in my dad's day."*

*"Not true, I'm sorry to say," commented another voice. Harry's stomach twisted. The other . . . **person** now aboard was clearly a demon, shorter than a man, green of skin and twisted of face. That it was wearing a priest's robes and crucifix was surely a diabolic jest. The rest of the crew were equally horrified, lurching back, muttering prayers, and grasping for luck-charms.*

*The creature continued, "The Banestorm has never died, though occurrences have been much less common of late. But I apologize, captain." **And saints ha' mercy**, thought Harry, **but he really sounds sorry.***

The demon – smiled? – in what might have been a reassuring way, on a human face. A distant, perennially unfazeable part of Henry's mind wondered wryly that he should be fixating on such a trifle when it was obvious he'd clearly gone mad.

The bizarre cleric seemed to sense Harry's thoughts; he swept his gnarled green hand to indicate the port. "This must be confusing for you. I know what you must be thinking, but you and your crew are neither dead nor damned. You are simply the victims of the greatest folly in the history of this world. But this is not the world you were born on."

And so another hapless other-dimensional traveler arrives on Yrth, snatched from our own Earth like so many before him. But what is the "Banestorm" that brought them here? How did it come into being, and what else has it done? And what other worlds has it ravaged?

This chapter's concise history of Yrth, from prehistory through the year 2005 A.D., answers these questions and more. It focuses on the continent of Ytarria, the "known lands" of Yrth. All dates, including pre-Banestorm ones, are given in terms of the modern calendar. For game purposes, GMs may assume that Yrthian dates work the same way as those of our own Earth.

Pre-Human Yrth

Prior to the Banestorm, Yrth was home to three major intelligent races – dwarves, elves, and orcs – and various minor breeds related to them. As long as Yrth's history has been recorded, dwarves and elves have occasionally clashed, but both groups *always* detested the orcs.

Dwarven and elven writings don't go back as far as one might expect for such long-lived peoples; the oldest date from approximately 200 B.C. Their earliest scrolls concern tribes struggling with one setback or another: a massive weather shift, an orc invasion, or – regrettably often – a dwarf-elf war.

As of the fourth century A.D., half a millennium later, Ytarria had basically stabilized. Zarak, which was larger then, housed the dwarves; they also had established smaller settlements in other mountain ranges. The elves mostly kept to the forests, which spanned huge areas at that time: the Great Forest, the Blackwoods, and the Emperor's Forest are merely the vestiges of a vast timberland that cloaked the continent's heart. The orcs roamed the surrounding lands, occasionally raiding elf villages and dwarf caves or burning forests to clear them for hunting. Dwarf-elf relations were as peaceful as they had ever been; the last war had ended centuries ago, and the mountain-dwellers happily traded steel arrowheads and blades for fresh meat and sun-grown vegetables from the forest folk.

Rise of the Dark Elves

Most elves, then as now, got along well enough with the other races sharing their world. While they had battled both dwarves and orcs in the past, they thought of peace as the natural state of things. Some, however, were less tolerant. Those who lived in the western Ytarrian Forest – where today there is only the Great Desert – suffered from constant orc harassment; some particularly brutal orc tribes, armed with stolen dwarven weapons, nearly exterminated the elves there around 350 A.D. The survivors resolved to eliminate the bandits . . . and do something about the dwarves as well, regardless of whether the underground folk deserved any blame for the harm done with the weapons stolen from them.

These hard-bitten survivors formed the nucleus of a movement which called itself "Defenders of the Shaded Woodlands." In its first decades, the group was a local cult with little use for the finer things of elven culture. Its warriors devoted their long lives to training, scouting, and occasional murderous raids. They succeeded in wiping out or driving off many nearby orc-tribes. As the years passed, some of the veteran Defenders put down their bows and picked up their harps, traveling elsewhere to tell their tales of loss and successful revenge. They gained recruits, becoming a significant faction in elven society.

Around 400 A.D., the Defenders persuaded the leaders of the elves to go to war against the dwarves of Zarak. The Zarakun regarded this as completely unprovoked, and it remains the primary reason many dwarves still mistrust elves. The war ended when a Zarak peace delegation faced down the Defenders' spokesmen at the elves' High Council. The Defenders were discredited for many generations – and elf generations are long – but they didn't vanish. They largely withdrew to their own communities, focused once again on martial training. They no longer spoke of the dwarves, when they entered the High Council at all. They spoke always of the orcs, the murderous orcs. They honed their own warrior skills, and many truly earned the name Defender, fighting for other elf communities threatened by orc raids. The dwarves did not forget their earlier excesses, but most of their fellow elves came to see the Defenders as merely a warrior cult with great skills and dedication.

And so the years passed, with the Defenders quietly bent on genocide, but not succeeding due to the orcs' prolific nature. The Defenders would think they had wiped out a tribe, only to find it back to full strength 20 years later. Around 1000 A.D., they decided to seek a more final solution.

Yrth Astronomy and Geography

Yrth lies in a parallel universe; its solar system closely resembles Earth's. The stars, planets, and sun are the same. Yrth's moon – called "the Moon" by most cultures – is the same size but shines more brightly, with a more silvery color. Also, the pattern of craters and maria is quite different. The day, year, and lunar month coincide with Earth's.

The above is reasonably common knowledge, though 99% of Ytarrians don't think much about such things. But Yrth's solar system has one thing Earth's lacks: numerous mana-rich asteroids in eccentric orbits. These asteroids have pelted Yrth and its moon many times over billions of years, radically altering Yrth's geography and mana level (see *The Ring Islands* on p. 107 for one example). There are a few dozen people in Ytarria who suspect this; possibly three know it for certain.

Ancient Catastrophes

Fortunately for Yrth, all of its craters were not made at once – more than a half-dozen *simultaneous* hits would likely have wiped out all life bigger than a cockroach. Still, asteroid activity caused mass extinctions. Those few Ytarrian scholars who understand something of paleontology suspect that life on Yrth was once very different. Some even speculate about long-extinct intelligent races.

The Banestorm

The Defenders counted many powerful mages among their members. Together they assembled a spell to bring a merciless bane down on the orcs. The intended nature of this bane is not clear; judging by the results, the spell was designed either to send all the orcs to another world or to summon creatures hostile to orcs. Perhaps it was just a generalized "wish" for something that would deal with the orc problem.

Their strongest mages conducted the primary spellwork at a high-mana site near the western edge of the Ytarrian Forest, close to what is now the center of the Great Desert. Other sorcerers and allies performed supporting ceremonies in communities across the continent. The spell built over weeks, coming to a climax on June 26th, 1050 A.D.

It backfired. Calamitously. The massive spell unleashed a torrent of magical wildfire that scorched much of the western forest and drained mana from hundreds of thousands of square miles. The effect cascaded into the supporting ceremonies, reducing many elven communities to cinders. Then it jumped to other high-mana spots, not all in elven territory. The sorcerous flames devastated the land, burning away woods and creating new deserts.

If that had been the full extent of the catastrophe, it still would have been the greatest blight of Ytarrian history. But the Defenders got their Bane as well. The spell snatched thousands of beings of various races from their worlds, depositing them on Yrth. These newcomers usually regarded the orcs with hostility, but often they were nearly as offensive to everyone else. Unnatural storms always heralded these dimensional breaches, and the Bane thus became known as the Banestorm.

Yet, despite the cataclysm, the Defenders survived. Their descendants continue to pursue their original aims, albeit in secret. See the sections on the Blackwoods (pp. 16, 99), *Dark Elves* (p. 18), and *"The Genetics of Magery"* (p. 29). GMs may wish to bar their players from reading the second section on the Blackwoods.

The disaster gave the Defenders the two names which Yrth knows them by today. Only among themselves are they called the Defenders now. Other elves call them "Bringers of the Storm," or "Storm-Bringers" for short. The other races simply call them the Dark Elves.

Early Chaos

Humans were by far the majority of the newcomers. Ships lost at sea found haven on unfamiliar shores, if not necessarily *safe* haven. Entire villages arrived on Yrth intact; travelers caught in sudden tempests never reached their intended destinations. Most of this occurred between the years 1050 and 1200 A.D., the approximate time of the Crusades on Earth.

Many immigrants died, but more survived and banded together. Some founded small villages, while others took to banditry. For most, day-to-day survival outweighed any desire or need to consider what had happened. Those few who had time for curiosity looked at the strange moon overhead and the stranger creatures abroad and concluded they were a very long way from home.

First Contacts

Some of the newcomers went years without meeting nonhumans; others encountered them quickly. The dwarves had retreated to their caverns, and met no humans for centuries. Some of the elves avoided the new beings, while others tried to help them. The orcs, inevitably, attacked.

Apart from the humans of Earth, the Banestorm also brought goblins, hobgoblins, kobolds, and reptile men from their homeworld Gabrook; centaurs, giants, halflings, and minotaurs from Loren'dil; merfolk and shark men from Olokun; and other, rarer creatures. The wilder newcomers like hobgoblins and minotaurs adapted quickly, resuming their savage hunting and scavenging with little interruption. The goblins and halflings, who had civilized parts of their homeworlds, struggled to adjust, but they were no less adaptable then mankind, and where they appeared in numbers, they thrived.

The first interracial encounters were usually marked by violence. Each saw the other as monsters, and even when the strangers were obviously intelligent, the struggle to survive encouraged hostility. Real or

Gaming the Banestorm

The default setting for a ***GURPS Banestorm*** campaign is present-day, but equally exciting games can take place in the 11th century, when the Banestorm was at its peak. The players should create characters native to Earth: probably medieval Europeans, though PCs from the Middle East, Asia, or even other worlds like Gabrook are also valid. Life on their home world seems to be proceeding as expected until a strange storm spills over the horizon . . .

Some adventurers may arrive on Yrth with nothing but the clothes on their backs, but it's possible for whole buildings and small villages to come through. Regardless, the transition will deprive newcomers of most of their social structure. In the new world, they must band together with other immigrants if they want to survive. Great leaders can create safety for their people and possibly found their own empires, reshaping the history of Yrth as presented here. See *Out of the Storm* (p. 234) for more ideas.

For more Banestorm details to exploit, see *Banestormed Ideas* (p. 32) or examine how the storm works underground (p. 158) and underwater (p. 180). Also, three spells have been developed for detecting different aspects of the cross-dimensional vortex (p. 25).

perceived competition for resources in some places was too fierce to encourage cooperation. However, occasional mixed groups worked together, if only because a larger band could survive where a small one couldn't. And as the 11th century drew to a close, many villages were settled and prosperous enough to greet mysterious newcomers with wary interest rather than arrows and pikes. Gradually, many races of Yrth, new and old, learned some of their neighbors could be trusted.

Others, however, had more trouble making friends. In particular, orcs regarded the immigrants as easy targets compared to the uncanny elves and hardened dwarves. They were wrong. The newcomers were smarter tacticians, worked together better, and often fought with utter desperation. A few scattered orc-tribes learned discretion and became quiet neighbors, but across most of eastern and southern Ytarria, orcs pursued their usual heedless destruction until it turned on them. Humans, goblins, halflings, and others eventually did what the Defenders could not, and eliminated orcs entirely from broad areas.

Magic Is Real!

Meanwhile, humans were confronted with another strange discovery: magic. The elves, who discovered some of their new acquaintances had "the gift" of magery, demonstrated magic's uses and encouraged them to adopt it, both on principle and as a survival tool. Goblins also brought a chaotic but enthusiastic tradition of wizardry from their own homeworld.

Initial reactions of panic at this "inhuman sorcery" caused yet more trouble between races, but human leaders soon recognized the potential of magical power. They convinced their followers this was "natural magic" rather than "diabolism" or "necromancy." Those talented humans who studied under elves or goblins quickly proved their worth, helping encourage acceptance. After a few decades, human wizards, both warriors and scholars, enjoyed great respect.

For more on current religious and cultural attitudes toward magic, see Chapters 2 and 3.

Spirit Encounters

Men occasionally encountered intangible beings only describable as "spirits." Christians and Muslims naturally had problems reconciling these creatures with their religious assumptions. Some scholars declared there *might* be an order of neutral "airy spirits" – neither angels nor demons, but something between. But these entities refused to acknowledge this as their status. Some seemed to claim they were more or less gods. While these spirits were rarely savagely hostile and humans could do little to hurt them, relations usually degraded fairly quickly, with the spirits taking offense and leaving settled areas. Most spirits eventually decided to have little to do with humanity, and Christian and Muslim societies in particular.

For more about the role of spirits in Ytarria, read about the northern settlements (p. 167), *Beings with Souls* (p. 57), Sahud's religious practices regarding spirits (p. 151), and *Spirits* (p. 199). GMs may also decide that several of Ytarria's cults (p. 53) traffic with such ethereal beings – some doing so willingly and wittingly, some not.

Civilizations Emerge

As the various Yrthian immigrants became more comfortable with their new home, villages grew into towns, cities, and eventually distinct regions and cultures. These are dealt with in more detail in Chapter 4, which describes the various current sovereignties of Ytarria.

Feudalism

Most of the newcomers to northern-central Ytarria were largely Christian men and women from western Europe. They found Earth's feudal culture well suited to the challenges of their new environment. Strong, charismatic leaders quickly attracted followers and acquired territory. Dozens of tiny kingdoms sprang up; most were annexed later by more powerful neighbors. For more on feudalism and how it influenced the formation of the Megalan Empire, see p. 45.

The Muslim Lands

Muslim tribesmen primarily appeared further south. Scattered widely, many followers of Islam adopted a nomadic lifestyle, traveling with their herds, raiding their neighbors, and meeting at a few permanent villages to trade. Others founded towns where the rich culture of the Abbasid Empire survived. Small groups of scholars and holy men recorded and preserved the science, philosophy, and literature of Islam as these towns grew into small cities. The libraries and universities these scholars founded are among Ytarria's greatest storehouses of knowledge.

Northern Settlements

The far northern reaches of Ytarria received a greater diversity of immigrants than the rest of the continent. In the frozen wastes north of the Whitehood Mountains, pagan Celts and Scandinavians merged into fierce, territorial clans. These groups may have been plucked from one of Earth's earlier eras, if not from a parallel Earth. Further west, on the coastline,

a variety of Asian and North American emigrants founded the unique realm of Sahud.

In both regions, especially in Sahud, humans formed amicable relations with the resident spirits. Since the newcomers' metaphysical beliefs were more flexible than monotheistic ones, they were less upset by the spirits' claims.

Other Immigrants

The Banestorm also brought people . . . including whole caravans, ships, and villages from dozens of other cultures. Significant numbers of Jews settled in both Islamic and Christian lands. African, Chinese, German, Indian, and Slavic groups popped up across the continent. Dominant local cultures quickly absorbed most of these smaller ones, but even today travelers can find isolated villages where almost all the inhabitants have black skin, worship Krishna and Vishnu, or speak undiluted German.

This is an opportunity for the GM to create any sort of interesting micro-culture that he can envision, as long as it is well off the beaten path!

Timeline (200 B.C. to 1550 A.D.)

200 B.C.: Earliest reliable dwarf and elf records date from this time.
350 A.D.: The "Defenders of the Shaded Woodlands" start to organize.
400: Dark elves incite the last major dwarf-elf war.
1000: "Defenders" begin devising the Bane spell.
1050: The Bane spell backfires; the resulting Banestorm begins.
1068: Humans of various cultures found Autheuil in the Great Forest.
1074: Founding of the Islamic city of as-Siyassi.
1160: Founding of the Islamic Holy City of Geb'al-Din.
1172: The Goblin Kingdom of Yibyorak comes into being.
1175: Benedictine monks establish Drift Abbey on Ental Island (later known as Isle Entelle).
1180: Founding of the city of Paradin (now Tredroy).
1187: The Banestorm brings the Knights of the Order of the Hospital of St. John to Yrth.
1188: The Hospitallers found New Jerusalem.
1194: Goblin chieftains execute Christian missionary Michael Olybrius.
1199: Founding of the Olybrian Order.
1200: Simon Menelaus founds the city and empire of Megalos. The Banestorm starts to subside. Islamic tribesmen begin roaming the region which will become Cardiel.
1229: The Goblin Kingdoms join the growing Megalan Empire.
1232: Emperor Menelaus I dies and is succeeded by his son.
1235: In the first recorded contact between humans and dwarves, a Megalan scouting party enters Zarak and discovers the scope of the dwarven kingdoms.
1270-1290: Border wars push the Northmen back beyond the Whitehood Mountains.
1310: The Knights Templar appear on Yrth.
1350: Megalan warlord Octavius Magnus convinces the Hospitallers to join the Megalan Empire in "spreading the dominion of Christ."
1360-1381: The First Crusade – Megalan legions invade Muslim lands in what will become central al-Wazif.
1365: Octavius Magnus leads the First Crusade into Paradin.
1379: Octavius Magnus assassinated.
1379-1381: The legions begin losing ground and soon retreat.
1403: Emperor Antonius II abducts Church leaders and demands they hold what is remembered as the first Conclave of Christian Archbishops, in Mehan.
1412: Founding of the Michaelite Order in Megalos.
1424-1428: The Second Crusade, a.k.a. Prince Ivor's Crusade – Megalan legions, led by the emperor's third son, descend on the south.
1435: Northern Muslim tribes hold the first Great Games in as-Siyassi.
1440-1470: The Grand Crusade – Megalos launches the most extensive anti-Muslim crusade yet, primarily in what will become Cardiel.
1442: Southern Muslims found al-Haz.
1444: Northern Muslims found al-Wazif.
1445: Southeastern Muslims found al-Kard.
1470: Megalan crusaders conquer al-Kard. Renamed Cardiel, it becomes a province of Megalos.
1473: The emperor names the first Imperial Viceroy of Cardiel.
1496: Paradin officially becomes Tredroy, "The City of Three Laws."
1499: The Viceroy forcibly converts Calder (formerly "al-Kard") to Christianity.
1515: Diophrates IV becomes Emperor of Megalos.
1519-1525: The Easter Crusade – Megalan legions based in Cardiel attack al-Wazif but gain no lands.
1519: Megalos conquers parts of eastern al-Wazif; Kardi revolutionaries incite general rebellion in central Cardiel.
1523: The first Heavenking declares himself Emperor of Sahud.
1525: The Legions return to deal with unrest in Cardiel. Megalos and al-Wazif sign a truce.

The Spread of Humanity

The first phase of the Banestorm lasted 150 years, tapering off at the dawn of the 13th century. By then, five generations of Yrth-born humans were living in some areas, quickly imposing mankind's talent for expansion and conquest on the other races. Most of what is now the Megalan Empire existed as small independent kingdoms and city-states – almost all ruled by men. North and south of these patchwork countries, human nomads roamed widely.

The Rise of Megalos

Simon Menelaus, born 1153, was a great mage, charismatic leader, and dedicated scholar. He founded the great city of Megalos in the year 1200. His stated goal was to rule all of Yrth. During his lifetime, he built an empire whose capital was and is the greatest, richest city in Ytarria. His dynasty expanded the empire using whatever methods worked.

Initially, Megalos' conquests came easily. The Goblin Kingdoms (see *Yibyorak,* p. 100) resisted for a while but eventually swore allegiance to the emperor and converted to Christianity. The western realm of New Jerusalem, governed by the Hospitallers, gave no ground until 1350, when a Megalan warlord named Octavius Magnus convinced them to join the Empire in pursuit of their common cause: spreading Christianity.

The Crusades

The four Ytarrian Crusades occurred between 1360 and 1525. Though they claimed religious motives, Megalan crusaders were more interested in conquest and imperial expansion. Ships bearing warriors of the First Crusade of Octavius Magnus landed near Shaniyabad in 1360 and struck south. Magnus and his men sacked their way across hundreds of miles, conquering and holding several cities for over a decade before a Muslim woman posing as a prostitute assassinated Magnus. Without his leadership, the Megalans lost ground and eventually retreated back across Keyhole Bay.

Everyone knew another war was inevitable. In 1424, Prince Ivor, tired of waiting on his indecisive father, Emperor Charles, launched his personal crusade against the coast of what is now al-Wazif and Cardiel. He managed to secure some territory, but by 1428 his forces had stalled out. The next emperor, Aurelius I, following in his younger brother's footsteps, called for a Grand Crusade against the Muslims in 1440.

Mere border squabbles had now transformed into a huge invasion which galvanized the Muslims. The three Islamic nations of al-Haz, al-Wazif and al-Kard formed. Al-Kard fell swiftly, conquered within a generation of its founding. The Megalans declared it a Christian land, renaming it Cardiel. Al-Haz and al-Wazif proved tougher, so in 1470 the Empire settled in to consolidate its existing gains. The fruitless Easter Crusade of 1519-1525 was the last; unrest in Cardiel seriously hamstrung the Megalan forces. Megalos and the Islamic nations then settled into a wary truce.

The Unified Church

The spread of Megalos eventually led to a more-or-less unified Christian church. Most of the human lands the Empire conquered were already basically Christian; as Megalos absorbed them, their priests technically became part of one church. By 1400, virtually all Yrth's Christians were subjects of the Megalan Empire. However, doctrinal disputes, often violent, continued. In 1403, Emperor Antonius II ordered his knights to kidnap the Empire's five most prominent clergymen. They were brought to the Cathedral of St. Paul in Mehan, where they stayed in "protective" custody until they resolved their differences. This was the first Conclave of Archbishops, later christened the Curia.

Simon Menelaus

Menelaus' parents were Banestorm victims of Byzantine birth who came to Yrth in the late 1140s. They arrived in the small kingdom of Sarcula, northwest of the fishing village which would become the capital city of Megalos. A scholarly couple, they were lucky many of their books made it to Yrth with them. The king of Sarcula valued learning, and Simon's father soon became one of his advisors. When Simon was born a few years later, he was raised in the halls of power, with an education unmatched within a thousand miles. As his magical talents manifested, the king – perhaps foolishly – hired mages to tutor him, thinking a court wizard could prove a valuable royal asset.

Menelaus in turn became advisor to the next king, then captain of his guard, and finally king himself via a deft, relatively bloodless coup. He knew, however, that this was only the first step. His education had covered Imperial Rome in great depth, and he saw the tiny kingdoms of Ytarria as perfect material to weld into his own empire. He moved his capital to the newly-christened town of Megalos and began building an army. His success in both conquest and conversion is history as well as legend.

Simon Menelaus' talents as a political leader were considerable; he was also a skilled mage, a brilliant general, and a fair combatant in his own right. His only obvious flaws were his thirst for power and his perhaps well-founded arrogance. When he died of old age in 1232, he left behind what was already the largest human empire in Ytarria. For more on Menelaus' attitudes toward political realities, see *Megalan Autocracy* (p. 46).

Timeline (1550 A.D. to 1900 A.D.)

1551: The last emperor of the Menelaen dynasty, Diophrates V, dies without an heir. A resurgence of the Banestorm brings humans from Renaissance France to Yrth. They continue to appear, especially in Araterre, for several decades.

1553: Al-Haz instigates the First Jihad for Kardi Liberation. It quickly fails.

1555: Al-Wazif attacks Megalos, starting the decade-long Bannock War.

1567: Wazifi forces secure Bannock and Craine. Megalos regains Craine.

1570: Members of the Society of Jesus appear in Yrth.

1575: The first major contact between Sahud and Megalos occurs when a Megalan trading ship lands near Kinkaku.

1578: Megalan philosopher-monk Domitus collates the "Domitian Code," the canonic laws of the Church.

1580-1590: The Purification of the Isles – Many Protestants maintain their beliefs secretly; some emigrate to Cardiel.

1585: Megalos launches an invasion of the dwarven realm of Thulin's Folk in the Whitehood Mountains. It fails disastrously.

1589: Representatives of al-Haz, al-Wazif, and Cardiel grant the city of Tredroy its charter.

1590: Barbarians of the Nomad Lands take the castle of Heolford and drive the Megalans south of the Whitehoods. The Empire builds the Emperor's Wall in response.

1606: The Banestorm subsides once again.

1613: The martyrdom of Simon d'Anjou leads to popular uprising against the Church in Araterre. The Curia is obliged to grant the Society of Jesus its full approval.

1625: Araterre becomes a Megalan principality.

1630: Work begins on the new Imperial Palace in Megalos.

1644: Megalos officially opens travel between Araterre and the rest of the world.

1730-1750: Unrest grows in Cardiel.

1758: The Viceroy of Cardiel moves his seat to Hadaton.

1762: Powerful nobles form a loose confederation of independent mini-states in western Cardiel.

1775-1782: Al-Haz conducts the Second Jihad for Kardi Liberation.

1776: Imperial legions land in Hadaton at the request of nobles in northeastern Cardiel.

1782: Al-Haz admits defeat and accepts the River Lorian and the Wadi al Fayd as a truce line with Cardien generals.

1784-1788: The War of Cardien Independence.

1784: Conall of Craine leads a pioneering expedition into the lands west of Megalos.

1788: Cardien lords sign the Charter of the Confederation of Cardiel in Calder City. The Duchy of Hadaton remains Megalan.

1789: Cardiel outlaws slavery.

1805: Cardiel annexes the Duchy of Hadaton with help from al-Wazif.

1812: Caithness colonists drive the orcs to the edge of the Great Desert. The Orclands form.

1822: Conall becomes the first Earl of Caithness.

1826: Conall declares Caithness independent and becomes King Conall I; Constantine, Archbishop of Clixtus, denounces the Curia as corrupt; the Megalan hierarchy excommunicates the Church of Caithness and its archbishop.

1827: Conall establishes the Knights of the Stone. Megalos launches an attack to regain Caithness (the First Megalos-Caithness War), which fails miserably.

1829: Sir Galen of Caithness founds the Order of St. George of the Dragon.

1837: The Blueshoal Conflict – A local dispute between two nobles turns into a war between al-Wazif and Cardiel. It is quickly resolved.

1840-1850: The Border Wars establish the modern boundary between al-Wazif and Megalos. Bannock becomes Megalan again.

1844: The Church of Caithness restores working relations with that of Megalos and Cardiel.

1845: Cardiel expels the Hospitallers for religious intolerance.

1850: The Templars are granted the right to elect their own Grand Master.

1855: The Curia creates the Archdiocese of Raphael.

1864: A major fire rips through Yibyorak.

1869: An earthquake and subsequent fire destroy much of Kinkaku.

1872: The Banestorm brings Asian humans to Araterre. They introduce new crops and establish themselves in scattered island villages.

New Challenges

The 16th century wrought many changes on Yrth, both magical and political. The last of the Menelaen emperors, Diophrates V, died in 1551 without an heir. Lacking easy prey on its borders, Megalos turned inward. Internal power struggles quickly devolved into civil war, causing the Empire to lose ground elsewhere from inattention.

Jihad

In the mid-1550s, al-Haz attacked Cardiel in an attempt to liberate it, but Cardien Muslims sabotaged the effort, preferring the relatively hands-off ruling style of the local Megalan nobility. Two years later, al-Wazif penetrated the Megalan border to gain back lost ground; in 1567, the Muslim invaders captured Bannock and (briefly) Craine.

The Banestorm Resurgent

Between 1200 and 1551, the Banestorm remained fairly quiet. Instead of transplanting whole communities, it caught people from Earth and elsewhere singly or in relatively small groups – a few hundred a year instead of thousands.

In 1551 an abrupt resurgence brought thousands of Earth natives – primarily French Protestants – to Ytarria over several decades. The dimensional tempest then tapered off again. Almost all of the newcomers arrived in the islands of Araterre, a few showing up in Cardiel. Fortunately for them, the powers of Ytarria were busy with each other and ignored them for almost 30 years.

The Purification of the Isles

Between 1580 and 1590, Megalos turned its attention to the islands off its southern coast and quickly became worried by what it found. People there spoke of great changes on Earth, telling of dynastic rise and ruin and a catalytic schism in Earth Christianity that had spawned something called "Protestantism." In some cases these new folk even propounded strange, heretical beliefs. They also knew of "gunpowder," which made powerful new weapons possible. Rumors of guns and cannon had arrived through the Banestorm before, but the technology had never been redeveloped successfully on Yrth, so little thought had been given to the matter.

Fortunately or unfortunately, Ytarrian human society had developed a strong conservative streak. In the chaos of the early years, people had clung desperately to what certainties they could preserve, coming to regard stable, feudal society as the only safety. The authoritarian empire of Megalos especially disliked changes that could threaten its power. Its rulers studied what they heard of the Renaissance and rejected its advances. Megalan battle-mages, respected figures in imperial society, wondered if gunpowder would threaten their privileges. And the prospect of a competing religion contravened Megalos' plans for one empire united by the "true" faith. The priesthood declared these new ideas as related and unilaterally tainted; gunpowder was firmly linked to Satan and declared a heresy.

Some scholars suspect that quiet conspirators, with other agendas, also encouraged condemnation of the new technology.

So Megalos sent wizards and priests, backed by the Imperial Navy and a legion of troops, to stamp out these threats. They used a strong iron fist inside a very thin velvet glove. Some craftsmen, scholars, and local priests had their memories magically erased; others were simply killed. However, Megalan political shrewdness was not entirely absent; the "diplomats" created a local puppet aristocracy and encouraged it to adopt the imperial style and manner. Meanwhile, the monks of Drift Abbey (see p. 105) made themselves popular by teaching the newcomers how to grow crops that could survive in the region.

The "Purification" enjoyed only limited and often shallow success. Many diligent "Protestants" slipped away to Cardiel, where their sect quietly persisted under the tolerant local lords. Others, told there was only one Church on Yrth – and they belonged to it – nodded obediently while secretly preserving their ideas. One newly arrived Catholic group, the Jesuit Order, proved equally independent-minded and hard to suppress despite its peculiarity to Yrthians; in the end, the Ytarrian Church accepted and incorporated the Society of Jesus. Recipes for gunpowder survived in a few hidden manuscripts. Other, subtler innovations were simply overlooked by the Megalans.

For more about gunpowder and other suppressed technology – including attempts to counter these bans – see *The Suppression of Gunpowder* (p. 30), *Underground Engineering* (p. 30), and *The Technology Ban* (p. 53). Scientific characters working secretly should be equipped with High TL (p. 183); *Beware of Black Powder* (p. 233) presents one way to create a campaign focused on these concerns.

An Yrthian Reformation?

Nothing truly comparable to the European Reformation has ever happened on Yrth. However, many major changes in religious thought on Earth have made their way to the new world through the Banestorm; thousands of Cardien Protestants explicitly declare one can be independent of the Church and still be Christian.

Naturally, the Church condemns this idea. Many rulers agree, especially since those same Protestants insist their religion does not require them to obey secular leaders if those leaders' decrees contradict Protestant beliefs. Many powerful people regard the "separation of church and state" as the most dangerous idea to come from Earth – even worse than gunpowder. Unfortunately for them, Cardiel lives by this principle every day. The concept is even gaining popularity in Megalos, thanks to rumors about ungodly activities at the Imperial court. If the Church doesn't find a way to adapt, the 21st century may see a Megalan Reformation.

Megalos Reduced

The acquisition of Araterre proved the last significant territorial gain for the Megalan Empire. In 1585, an attempt to conquer the dwarves of the Whitehood Mountains backfired badly; hardly any of the Imperial warriors survived. Predictably, and worse in the long run, dwarven willingness to trade with the Empire fell off sharply. Reduced Imperial strength near the mountains helped Northmen take over Heolford in 1590. The Megalans were forced to build a giant wall north of Quartedec to prevent further losses and raids.

By the 18th century, the Empire's authority in Cardiel had begun to slip. Local Christian lords were tired of sending taxes to emperors they saw as increasingly weak and corrupt. Further, many Megalans moved to Cardiel seeking greater independence. The few powerful Cardien Muslims were even more ready to shake off Megalan rule.

The trigger, oddly, came from al-Haz. In 1775, the Muslims declared another jihad, again to liberate al-Kard. The Cardiens stood united against this invasion. Armies from all over Cardiel marched to war before the Empire knew there was a problem. When Imperial legions arrived in coastal Hadaton, locals treated them as invaders often as not. A hundred miles south, the legions actually encountered resistance from *Cardien* forces.

By 1782 the Cardiens had beaten back the Hazis. Two years later, they turned on the Megalans, driving them into Hadaton. In 1784, Cardien nobles told Megalos that the gentry no longer considered themselves bound by their feudal oaths. Cardiel declared independence after four years of ensuing war; Megalos retained only Hadaton, and only for a few years.

The Empire's only attempt at expansion during this period was Conall of Craine's expedition west into low-mana, orc-held territory. In 1812, after three decades of fighting, Conall and his people pushed the orcs to the edge of the Great Desert. The orcs fled across the wasteland, leaving the humans to colonize their newly won territory. In 1822 it became the county of Caithness. A mere four years later, Conall declared Caithness an independent kingdom. Megalos tried and failed to reclaim it, and Caithness has remained independent. For more on Caithness' history, see Chapter 4.

Over the next 50 years, the Banestorm brought many new humans to Araterre, including entire villages; most were from Bali. The transplanted Asians brought new crops and minor but useful technologies. They increased the wealth, cultural richness, and diversity of what had been a marginal region. Araterre remained part of the empire, but an increasingly fractious part. Coupled with the defections of Cardiel and Caithness, these events clearly signaled that Megalos had lost much of its power and confidence by the end of the 19th century.

The Last Hundred Years

The 20th century saw its share of wars, though few affected the map much. However, the last decades have been marked by increasing instability; this trend persists today. Political tensions are rising, and new Banestorm-brought peoples are growing frighteningly incomprehensible to the locals.

The Mages' War

In 1924, after many provocations, al-Wazif invaded Megalos. Muslim armies temporarily captured Bannock and besieged Craine and Raphael. Their aggressive use of mages in both battle and support roles probably accounted for much of their initial success. This strategy gave Wazifi forces particular advantage when facing the spell-spurning Hospitallers of New Jerusalem.

The Muslim advance only slowed when Megalan legions arrived from the east. The Christian forces fought fire with fire, throwing their best battle mages against the invaders. The first such confrontation took place at Raphael, leveling most of the city. Megalan mages exercised more caution thereafter, but still managed to drive the invaders back across the original border within four years.

More Orc Aggression

The first significant orcish onslaught of the 20th century, roughly contemporary with the Mages' War, amounted to a full-scale invasion of Caithness. King Morill I and Lord Peredur of Durham led their people to victory, completely routing the orcs. About 50 years later, in the mid-1980s, orcs began raiding Caithness proper to collect hostages and intelligence. In the Orclands themselves, Castle Defiant fell to orc tribes; the colonists in the area had endured almost a decade of brutally systematic killings. These stealthier tactics appear to be the work of outcast dwarves providing orc bands with unusually intelligent leadership. Irregular raiding continues today against both Caithness and Zarak.

A World Seen in Dreams

New arrivals from Earth often notice that a number of Ytarrian races bear striking similarities to the mythical creatures of their homeworld. Yrth is in fact an odd *myth parallel* (see p. B527). No one is certain how such things happen; the theory that some storytellers can psychically "see" across dimensions is one possibility. For further discussion of parallel Earths and related topics, consult the *Infinite Worlds* chapter of the ***Basic Set*** as well as ***GURPS Infinite Worlds*** itself.

Timeline (1900 A.D. to 2005 A.D.)

1924-1928: Al-Wazif and Megalos wage the Mages' War.
1925-1926: Orcs invade Caithness and are defeated.
1930: Caithnessers cross the Great Desert to colonize the southern Orclands.
1932: The Second Megalos-Caithness War: Megalos makes a token attempt to reclaim Caithness and again fails.
1934: Dame Devin of Caithness becomes the first female knight.
1935: The Invasion of Ten-Tiri: Al-Haz attacks Cardiel in a brief border squabble.
1940: The Grand Master of the Order of the Stone in Caithness knights Dame Devin's female squire, validating female knighthood.
1945: The Banestorm briefly surges in activity before subsiding again.
1970: Thulin X, dwarf-lord of the Whitehood Mountains, petitions the Kings of Zarak for a boycott of Megalos. They deny it.
1975: King Morill III of Caithness dies, leaving his six-year-old son as heir.
1976: The Cardien Council of Lords elects Vincent of Calder as Prince.
1982: The Third Megalos-Caithness War: Caithness turns back a Megalan invasion, at great cost to both powers.
1984: To the concern of local dwarves, humans discover gold in the Baran River of Quartedec.
1985: Conall VI of Caithness is crowned at the age of 16. In the Orclands, dwarf-led orcs begin systematically wiping out Caithnesser colonists. In Caithness, orc raiders capture Lady Bronwyn of Durham, but mercenaries hired by her father, Lord Peredur, help her escape. Clan Tsushuo of Sahud loses a low war with Clan Nyodo.
1987: A Megalan legion enters the mysterious Blackwoods seeking news of the dark elves; few emerge again.
1988: Gold from the Baran River becomes toxic. Violence and kidnappings mar a tourney in the Caithness lording of Harkwood.
1989: Emperor Diophrates XII is attacked by a demon. Lord Peredur of Durham dies and is succeeded by Lady Bronwyn. Caliph Ishaq of al-Wazif dies; his son Hafsa at-Talib succeeds him. Emir Ayyub of al-Wazif captures Taveon of Dekamera during a slave raid by the latter.
1990: A revolt in Scariswic (part of Hidelban, in Megalos) results in the death of the local baron. The low- to normal-mana border between Caithness and Megalos slowly begins to move southwest. Prince Vincent of Cardiel steps down; the Council of Lords elects Micardene of Tredroy as the new Prince.
1991-1995: The Frontier Wars: Wazifi forces attack Megalos, recapturing Bannock. The war eventually grinds to a halt with no other major changes.
1991: Arena games in Megalos are interrupted by the escape of several enslaved gladiators. A major Sahudese trading mission led by Shimota, head of clan Yarohito, arrives in Megalos.
1992: Northmen attack Kethalos but are turned back. Ahmed ibn Nabil as-Safa, vizier to the Sultan of al-Haz, and Alihaba al-Khalil, Pasha of Alhallabad, die of the Pilgrims' Plague.
1993: Opening of the Ekmekyk canal, connecting Lake Acheron with the ocean. Naga-Go becomes the head of the Ah clan in Sahud.
1994: Castle Defiant, in the Orclands, falls. Conall VI officially recognizes Lady Bronwyn of Durham as Peredur's successor.
1995: A Sahudese assassin kills the Megalan Viscount of Myrgan to avenge an insult to the Heavenking. In Zarak, King Morthrinn of Morriel dies and is succeeded by his son, Morkagast.
1996: In Caithness, Lord Herin of Oakwood dies and is succeeded by his nephew, Brance. In Megalos, Earl Gavin of Dekamera dies; Emir Ayyub releases his son Taveon to assume Gavin's earldom.
1997: In Caithness, Lord Towne becomes lord of Sterling upon his father's death.
1999: Deneral (formerly of Mershall) uses a flimsy pretext to start the Caithness Civil War. Dwarves offer to buy the Baran River outright. Clan Tsushuo of Sahud reclaims its lands. Some millennial panic strikes Christian nations.
2000: In Cardiel, Baron Howarth of Alimar dies and is succeeded by his son Saywell.
2001: In Caithness, the lording of Blythe falls to reptile men.
2002: A large Megalan force invades the Blackwoods, emerging with evidence of Dark Elf activity. In Caithness, elves insinuate themselves into the government of Harkwood. In Sahud, Shimota, head of Clan Yarohito, dies and is succeeded by his son Najimatsu.
2004: Prince Micardene of Cardiel dies; the Council of Lords elects Crivelli of Hadaton as the new Prince. Dwarves abruptly stop mining the Baran River.
2005: Present day. Caithness Civil War continues intermittently.

Magic on Earth?

Most of the humans brought to Yrth by the Banestorm seem to have come from our own Earth or one very like it, with no obvious magic, no interfering gods, and no monsters worse than men themselves. However, it's quite possible that Yrthian humans hail from more than one Earth, especially since groups like the Northmen seem to have come from an earlier Europe than most Banestorm victims (see p. 168). Magic or other supernatural oddities may well have been present on one or more parallel Earths. The assumption for a ***GURPS Banestorm*** campaign is that "our" Earth has little or no magic, but GMs are free to change this.

The Blackwoods Spread

The Blackwoods (see p. 99) sit like a sinister enigma north of Keyhole Bay, their southern edge skirting one of Megalos' major trade routes. To make things worse, they began expanding at an unnatural rate some years ago. It seemed as if reality was twisting, especially when some of the more credible forest natives insisted the woods had always been their current size.

By the 1980s, the Empire could no longer ignore the potential crisis. Theories abounded, but most people assumed dark elves were at work. Megalos sent scouts, mages, and support militia to investigate in 1987, but few returned, and none were sure what they had fled from. A larger expedition in 2002 managed to return with evidence of dark-elven activity. It seems that the old menace is back, in strength, and must be rooted out, but no one has yet risen to the demanding task – which is only complicated by what Megalos failed to learn. See p. 99 for the truth of the matter.

The Frontier Wars

In 1991, Emir Harun abd-Ishaq of al-Wazif invented a pretext to attack the Megalan city of Bannock. Having correctly sensed the emperor was distracted, Harun determined it was a perfect time to start a pre-emptive war. He captured the city but suffered heavy losses.

Bannock's loss started the Frontier Wars, which lasted four years with two lulls. The Megalan counterattack was poorly coordinated and half-hearted; few legions east of the Blackwoods bothered to mobilize. The city remained in a state of siege while the Hospitallers pushed toward Qazr as-Sawh. They never managed to breach the Wazifi defenses there, but they blocked many later attempts to invade Megalan territory.

By 1995, both sides had lost thousands of men with little to show for it; apart from still-contested Bannock, neither power had made more than token progress. The legion generals used an ambiguously phrased command from the emperor as an excuse to sue for peace. The Wazifis accepted, and the border was re-established at the River Makarem, along Caithness' and Megalos' southern edges.

Since then, the Wazifis have refortified their border, including Bannock, but few of their leaders want more fighting. On the north side of the river, some nobles yearn for a chance to regain their honor against the Muslims, but others wonder if there aren't easier targets within Megalos itself. Tensions on the border are relatively low – for the moment.

Civil War in Caithness

King Conall VI of Caithness gained his crown at age 16, in 1985. Many local nobles took his youth as an excuse to ignore him; even at 36, he has never solidly grasped his kingdom's reins. Though an adept economist and able tactician, Conall's political skills have never matched those of his vassals who do not want a strong king. In 1999, his enemies' manipulations led to outright civil war. The conflict continues to this day, despite occasional years of relative peace. Conall must definitively reunite his kingdom or watch it splinter as Caithness' various lordlings squabble over his seat and its trappings.

Now

Megalos remains the most powerful country in the world, but it shows little appetite for further conquest. The emperor seems more interested in his own pleasure, and many powerful nobles are wondering if it isn't time to advance themselves with a coup, or at least an attack on a neighbor. The Caithness civil war drags on, and the dwarf-led orcs are no doubt preparing to take advantage of the disorder. In the south, Wazifi factions bicker, and some dream of invading the Empire again; al-Haz is mired in its own internal troubles. On the coast, pirates menace Araterre, Cardiel, and the southern Empire. To the north, the dwarves remain steadfast as ever, the Northmen watch Megalos for signs of weakness, and the Sahudese continue their own strange ways.

These are interesting times.

It's quite possible that Yrthian humans hail from more than one Earth, especially since groups like the Northmen seem to have come from an earlier Europe than most Banestorm victims.

Chapter Two

Life in Ytarria

Over the years, I have come to set considerable store by the good sense of my chamberlain, Blagonrathir. Despite his lack of inches – the inevitable result of having gnomes for both parents, and in no wise his own fault – the fellow has a mind like an Aralaise dagger. Hence, I should have paid more attention when he advised against a visit to Zarak.

"I thought that you found dwarves agreeable," I said.

"I find them an admirable people," he replied, "in their place. That place is, of course, the Street of Smiths in Redhall."

"And not their own country, then?" I asked.

"No, Sire. I believe that the Zarakun lack a crucial sense of proportion."

But Aunt Giselle had expressed the crucial necessity of this journey with her usual force. Uncle Osric's trade agreements had to be confirmed by a member of the family in person once every ten years. "And you're the only family member we can do without just now," she said. "So keep quiet, eat what they put in front of you, and get yourself home by harvest time if politely possible." Well, I owe old Osric a favor or two from my days as a page at Redhall, and no one can say I don't know my duty. Especially not when Aunt Giselle is telling me what it is.

At first, I thought Blagonrathir had been unduly cautious. My comfort persisted when the dwarves invited me into their caves, which I'd always understood was something of a compliment. Indeed, it lasted even when the outer doors slammed shut. It was only when I heard a familiar giggle behind me that a chill descended my spine like a small but malevolent specter.

Turning, I saw exactly what the giggle promised. A vision in lilac, with a badly arranged wimple and the affectionate tractability of a distemperate gryphon. "Hello, brave knight," it said.

It was Dame Vulnavia of Simonton, the most impossible woman to whom I have ever addressed a poem. Much less a sonnet written to order by a well-chosen minstrel. Indeed, the errors of youth had returned to haunt me.

There are some dangers a knight should not have to confront at the best of times, let alone when he's under a mountain, two hundred miles from home, with his chamberlain unavailable to shield him, thanks to dwarven protocols.

This was going to be a difficult day.

The people and politics of Ytarria are as diverse as they are combative. This chapter covers both the original races of Yrth and those brought by the Banestorm.

The People of Yrth

Ytarria is home to at least a dozen major fully sapient races. The number of semi-intelligent races has never been settled, partly because the line between clever animal and dumb humanoid is at best difficult to draw. The peoples discussed here are ordered into five groups, based on their worlds of origin: Yrth, Earth, Gabrook, Loren'dil, and Olokun.

For ***GURPS*** templates and notes on playing members of each race, see pp. 188-202.

The Elder Folk

As far as most Yrthian folk know, these races have always been native to this world. Natural philosophers with some understanding of paleontology know the Elder Folk have lived here for thousands if not millions of years.

Dwarves

Short, stocky humanoids who predominantly live underground, dwarves are noted for their emphatic personalities. They are skilled at keeping secrets and bearing grudges. The Zarakun supply most of the world's metal and stone, making them a major economic force in Ytarria.

Very few non-dwarven citizens reside in the Kingdom of Zarak, which has operated as the center of dwarven politics for millennia. Prior to the Banestorm, dwarves lived under every mountain range in Ytarria, but as humans spread, the smaller dwarven communities were abandoned or driven out; dwarves no longer inhabit the Fence of God (*Kedherak* in dwarfish) and the mountains of Megalos. Some dwarves live among humans, though they are often reluctant to discuss their reasons for doing so.

Dwarves hold an ancient grudge against elves for both wronging them in the pre-Banestorm wars and causing the Banestorm itself. That elves as a whole aren't responsible for this calamity is usually ignored; dwarves hold that elves should have recognized the peril sooner. Zarakun also resent Megalan attempts to conquer dwarven territory. Dwarves and dragons share too many interests such as wealth and territory to get along. And, of course, dwarves have been fighting off orc raids for thousands of years.

Gnomes

Gnomes are related to dwarves and are physically similar. However, they live above ground and tend to be farmers or herders. Indeed, many reside on the surface of Zarak or in the foothills of its mountains, trading foodstuffs for dwarven ore. Most gnomes, however, live among humans, practice human religions, and follow human laws. Their versatility allows them to flourish in many trades. Their political clout is limited; those who live near a dwarven clanhold accept the leadership of its lord, while others usually swear allegiance to whatever race dominates the area. They generally get along with dwarves as well as the other non-monster races.

Elves

Elves are slender, attractive, long-lived humanoids easily recognizable by their pointed ears. Most live in loosely organized small tribes of 20 to 100, far from humans – usually in small villages deep in the woods, especially in the Great Forest (p. 120). Indeed, as humans have colonized new lands over the centuries, elves have typically retreated deeper into the woods. However, elven settlements are scattered across most of the continent, and some dwell in human cities; many seem to quite like humans, even marrying them and having children together. They apparently built great cities of their own thousands of years ago, but their way of life changed long before the Banestorm. Most elves seem content with their current existence and either don't know about or don't care to discuss their distant past.

Elves, who naturally think in the long term, practice a very subtle kind of "garden agriculture," planting and tending trees and shrubs that keep their forests hospitable – for the native tribes if not for other folk. They cultivate many useful plants such as *fayflax*, whose fibers can be woven into cloth and even paper; *bread oak*, which looks like Earth's oak trees but

The Dark Elves

The "dark elves" are a faction within elf culture, not a separate race. They call themselves the Defenders or the Purifiers, and tend to form their own communities, since the core of their philosophy is genocidal xenophobia, first against orcs, and then against anyone not an elf. The core of this group lives in the Blackwoods, where it currently faces wars on two fronts; see p. 99.

The Defenders have sympathizers and apologists scattered throughout normal elf society, but no one ever forgets that it was the Defenders who triggered the Banestorm (see p. 7), doing more harm than an eternity of orc raids.

The dark elves are considerably more united in organization and thinking than most elves; others find them frighteningly conformist. Unlike mainstream elves, for instance, a dark elf community will use physical coercion on those who disagree with the Council's decisions.

The dark elves defend their home woods fiercely and stealthily. Against larger groups, they may use terror tactics so survivors will discourage further invasions. They often control forest animals and even the trees themselves. Some dark-elven families actually consist of werewolves who lead giant forest wolves into combat.

The struggles in the Blackwoods are stretching such tactics to the limit. The Megalans now know what they are dealing with, and while dark elves make much better mages, they are still grossly outnumbered. Some of the dark elf leaders are desperately searching for some magical wonder-weapon; others are planning a great evacuation.

for the plump, edible acorns; and several excellent sources of dyes. Hence, their defense of their forests has practical as well as aesthetic reasons.

Since elves consider age to bestow wisdom, a tribe or community will refer serious issues to a council of elders. The elders will meet, talk, listen to any other elf who wants to say something, and make a decision . . . which the elves involved will almost always treat as a mandate, though the community has no police to enforce council decisions.

Before the Banestorm, a High Council, made up of 33 ancient and brilliant elves, led the race. If modern elves retain a High Council, or even memories of its workings outside of song and legend, they don't discuss it with others.

Elves have little apparent political clout in modern Ytarria, and don't appear to seek it. But there is no doubt that many elder elves are capable of playing political games with great skill, among other races as well as their own. A human ruler with elven subjects will almost always have at least one old and valued elven adviser.

Most elves treat members of most other races as individuals and have few prejudices. However, they are dismayed by the dwarves' persistent dislike; some have come to return it. And even outside the ranks of the dark elves, few can tolerate orcs.

A Dying Race

The Banestorm killed many elves outright; as many or more died in the chaotic aftermath. Despite the millennium since, elven numbers have never recovered, and humans – who clear ever-increasing amounts of forest for their own towns and cities – have only exacerbated the problem. Elves seem to require their forests – perhaps magically, perhaps emotionally, if not both. It may simply be that a non-forest-based diet is bad for their health in the long term. Though they don't discuss it much with outsiders, the elven population is dwindling.

Some elves are predictably philosophical about this, but many, even apart from the dark elves, wish things were otherwise. Some negotiate with humans to preserve the forests; others write sad but memorable songs. A few wonder if a variant on the Banestorm might carry them to another, pristine world.

Sea Elves

Sea elves breathe water rather than air, but act very much like their land kin. Since the Banestorm, they have been few and scattered. Some live in established undersea villages, but most wander; the Banestorm devastated all their great cities, leaving them at a survival-oriented Tech Level 1. They get along well with others of their race except for dark elves, whom they despise. Generally they feel ambivalent about other surface races.

Orcs

Orcs have lived on Yrth as long as dwarves and elves and thus are technically entitled to be called Elder Folk, though dwarves and elves resent being compared with orcs in any way, much less put in the same category.

Orcs are short, hairy humanoids with enlarged canines. Most other Yrthian races consider them stupid, dirty, and aggressive; unfortunately, they're usually right. Humans are orcs' greatest rivals, as only humans can match orcs for aggressiveness, sheer stubbornness, and constant breeding. The dwarves and elves nurse ancient, bitter feuds with the orcs. (Renegade dwarves, however, sometimes become orc *leaders;* see p. 166.)

Orcs are the most numerous among those races generally considered "monsters." The majority of the tribes live in the Orclands on Ytarria's west coast, humans and elves having driven them there over the centuries. However, small raiding bands lurk on the edges of all civilized lands. Increasing numbers of orcs have adapted to life in human countries, especially when they can fill roles as herders, ranchers, woodsmen, and the like. Understandably, others tend to distrust civilized orcs until they prove themselves. Nobody trusts barbarian orcs – not even other orcs.

Tribal orcs subsist primarily by hunting. Though they burn forest mostly for sport, doing so actually clears hunting ranges and encourages fresh growth, providing food for many races and creatures. Orcs are not conscious of this; they set woodland fires because it's fun, demonstrates their strength, and annoys the elves.

Orc populations follow cycles of growth and collapse that fit their violent nature and ability to replace losses rapidly. A few decades after fighting a full-scale war with orcs, humans may consider them nearly mythical. Orcs thus don't participate much in Ytarrian politics much, except as general antagonists to all their neighbors. That, of course, may change in years to come.

Ogres

Bigger and meaner cousins to orcs, the massive ogres are questionably distinguished by being appallingly stupid – worse than even the most primitive orcs. Most live among orc tribes, serving as heavy laborers and shock troops. Solitary ogres lurk in many wilderness areas. The largest human cities are home to a few, though these are usually carefully-watched servants or slaves. On their own, ogres have nothing resembling a culture. They not only lack political power but have no interest in acquiring any.

Dragons

Yrthian dragons closely resemble the giant, mythical reptilian beings of Earth. Almost all can fly and breathe fire, and a typical wyrm possesses great intelligence and longevity. Most are accomplished mages. It's possible that they were created magically, but either no one's asked, or no one's survived asking. While Yrth has had dragons since before the Banestorm, it's unclear whether they evolved here, immigrated voluntarily, or have some stranger origin.

Nonhuman Names

Many Yrthian races don't consider names "male" or "female." Elves and dwarves sometimes do, but the rules are often unclear to anyone not familiar with the culture.

Centaurs: Aessus, Chosharoh, Churrg, Muunaah, Shanool.

Dragons: Those who live near or among humans tend to adopt names appropriate to the region; see *Lands of Yrth* for examples. Among themselves, dragon names are usually long and full of meaning; some are original, others hark back to history unknown to other races.

Dwarves: Boyarron, Blagonrathir, Kasakonann, Miloavst, Tosoroyarl.

Elves: Jaidiel, Maiel, Patral, Thidan, Unwaden.

Giants: Ahken Two-Heads, Dolk Drihg, Grag Thab, Rond Hurr, Uhb the Colorful. Giants are particularly fond of nicknames.

Gnomes: As for local dwarves or humans.

Goblins and Hobgoblins: Dakiiri, K'jaakis, Tuukopy, Yig'oor. Also see p. 88.

Halflings: Usually as for local humans.

Kobolds: As for local humans or goblins, though usually short.

Minotaurs, Orcs, and Ogres: Ahk, Har, Irg, Salig, Tarn.

Merfolk and Shark Men: Rarely pronounceable out of the water. Land dwellers who deal with them often assign them nicknames.

Reptile Men: Drakatk, Kk'traa, Ssaallkoo, Thissikk, Xuusleeng.

Sea Elves: Not unlike the names of their landgoing cousins, but with longer vowels and softer consonants. May also be difficult to pronounce when not underwater.

Fortunately for the humanoid races, dragons are also very scarce. Most dragons keep to themselves and pursue goals which other sentient beings find thoroughly mystifying. Still, some willingly trade secrets with wizards or even deign to barter for treasure. A very few dabble in mortal politics, often quite effectively (see *Baron Adrien Dorilis*, p. 145). A dedicated consortium of dragons could probably reshape the societies of Ytarria beyond recognition; fortunately, they don't appear to have any interest in doing so. Dragons get along poorly with most other species, largely because they're huge and terrifying. Rarely do they tolerate others of their own race either, being highly territorial creatures.

For information on dragon characters, see p. 227.

The Newcomers

The following races came to Yrth from elsewhere . . . humans from Earth; goblins, kobolds, and reptile men from Gabrook; halflings, giants, minotaurs, and centaurs from Loren'dil; and merfolk and shark men from Olokun. It's quite possible that other as yet unencountered races were pulled through to Yrth from these or other worlds or times; there are still unexplored regions on Ytarria.

Humans

Humans dominate Ytarria by sheer numbers; tens of millions of them range across the entire continent and the nearby islands. Most are Christians and Megalan citizens, but the other races agree that humanity's most amazing feature is its diversity.

Goblins

Short, green, and humanoid, goblins are one of the most common races on Yrth. They are the majority population in much of southern Megalos. They adapted quickly after the Banestorm; by 1200 they had established the Goblin Kingdoms. However, the Empire soon absorbed their lands, and the goblins became relatively good Imperial Christians. Elsewhere, goblins also practice Islamic and pagan religions; they tend to pattern their beliefs after those of the dominant local human culture.

Within the Empire, goblins have significant political and economic clout, being numerous, extroverted, bright, and often magically talented.

Interracial Relations

With few exceptions (see p. 200), races of Yrth cannot interbreed. However, romantic love respects no barriers, and those swept up in it usually adapt to allow for some sense of physical intimacy. A noble reptile man and a kind halfling must face obstacles both cultural and physical; their relationship may well end tragically. But the heart does as it wills.

Many Ytarrian human societies barely tolerate close relations between different races of *humans*, let alone between humans and nonhumans. The Church finds human-elven couples only remotely acceptable; everything else is strictly forbidden. Al-Haz promotes similar attitudes, while Wazifis and Caithnessers subscribe to marginally more tolerant beliefs. In the latter two countries, authorities ignore anyone who maintains the pretense of being uninvolved. In Cardiel, interracial couples can appear in public and only occasionally suffer insults. In Sahud, it depends on how blithely everyone can pretend nothing unusual is going on. If an heir is needed, any deliberate social blindness ceases immediately. Many interracial couples find it easiest to live in the wild, far from nosy or judgmental neighbors.

Notably, the infertility of most cross-race pairings benefits certain bordellos in urban red-lantern districts. Granted, catering to this predilection is exactly as acceptable as prostitution: not very. The best customers at such places are disguised nobles with exotic tastes. Even in such a mercantile environment, love does occasionally find its way.

Nonhuman attitudes toward these situations vary. Elves, land- or sea-dwelling, believe spirit matters more than form and generally don't mind as long as the non-elf is good-hearted. The dark-elven reaction is easily imagined. The conservative dwarves and gnomes rarely get involved with anyone outside their races; even dwarf-gnome relationships are unusual in Zarak. Plucky halflings often flirt with short humans, but usually only for fun. Goblins find other races too brown or pink; they usually don't form intimate attachments even with hobgoblins, let alone completely different species. Relations between orcs and other races are rarely pleasant in any sense.

They fit into human society well and are naturally curious. While they don't care for the more violent, chaotic races of Yrth, they don't have any long-standing racial feuds and are generally capable of taking other beings as they find them. Goblins identify themselves with their locality first and their race second, and expect others to do the same.

Hobgoblins

Hobgoblins are to goblins as ogres are to orcs: larger, dumber cousins often considered monsters. A few live among goblins – typically as servants – while most remain hunter-gatherers. These dwell in small bands in forests or wastelands, often flee from powerful foes, and survive by attacking weaker races and animals.

Kobolds

The small, blue-skinned kobolds are characterized by flightiness and lack of intelligence. While small kobold clans exist in isolated areas, often in complete squalor, most kobolds take odd jobs and live hand-to-mouth in human or goblin cities. Though numerous, kobolds have no impact on Ytarrian politics. Even the smartest are none too bright, and they receive little respect from other races.

Reptile Men

A deep gulf of mistrust divides the dinosaurian Reptile Men from non-reptilian races. It does not help that wilder reptile men sometimes *eat* humans or goblins. Savage humans and orcs return the favor by hunting them for their brilliantly-scaled hides, which make beautiful and sturdy armor (treat as leather armor, three times as costly, and giving +2 to the wearer's reactions from fellow savages . . . but any Reptile Man reacts at -6 to the wearer, and civilized people of any race react at -4.).

Most reptile men belong to small, nomadic tribes on the plains of al-Haz or in the Great Desert. The latter, fierce raiders all, have recently devastated one of the lordings of Caithness (see p. 119). The reptile tribes of al-Haz coexist peacefully with humans and often follow the Koran, but they still avoid contact with other races, which renders moot any political power they might wield. Only dragons truly get along with reptile men.

Gabrook: World of Sands

The world of Gabrook (pronounced GAH-BRUK) was once home to the goblins, as well as kobolds, hobgoblins, and reptile men. Goblins and kobolds are related, but only distantly. The first three races are basically mammalian, with bodies that work much like those of humans. The Banestorm has swept people from Gabrook on at least three occasions: twice in the 11th century and once in the 12th.

Goblins remember their homeworld as a predominantly arid, generally average-mana planet with numerous small regions of high mana. Most Gabrookians found Yrth's forests mystifyingly alien. Snow was completely new to them.

On Gabrook, goblins flourished much as humans did on Earth. They commonly enslaved kobolds and fought defensive wars against reptile-men raiders. If any Gabrookian emigrants have been transported to Yrth since 1200, they haven't made much of a stir. Current events on Gabrook are a mystery, though many of its previous residents assume – and hope – their world still exists beyond the Banestorm's veil.

Centaurs

Centaurs are human from the waist up and equine below, with four legs. Their human halves spring from the point where a horse's neck connects with its torso. Typically nomadic and pastoral, centaurs prize freedom. They usually inhabit temperate plains or brushlands near forests; they get along well with the elves within. Centaurs prefer to keep to themselves but sometimes deal with other races for trade or mutual defense. Most are uncomplicated wanderers, but some are brilliant sages, and a few have advised dukes and kings. Centaurs are only rarely found on Yrth. Several substantial herds live in the northern Orclands, where they maintain a loose alliance with humans against orcs; a few groups have settled in al-Haz, al-Wazif, and Cardiel. Folk who tend to stay in one place mystify centaurs; their relationship with such races is sometimes strained.

Giants

Often topping nine feet, giants live primarily in the Nomad Lands (p. 167) and the northern Orclands (p. 163). Humans rarely see them; giants are few and far between on Yrth. Feelings toward their neighbors tend toward the diffident or violent; almost none of Ytarria's other humanoid races feel at ease with beings that large.

Halflings

Halflings rarely exceed three feet in height but otherwise resemble humans, physically and culturally. Most are domestic; no nomadic halflings exist in Ytarria. Large populations of them can be found in most human lands.

Because of issues of scale, they tend to settle their own villages or build distinct communities within human cities. In the Empire, halflings have less clout than goblins but possess significant voice within the crafting guilds. The ultimate quiet neighbors, halflings get along well with most races.

Minotaurs

The bull-headed minotaurs look like large humans from the neck down. It's no surprise most races consider these solitary, aggressive, largely carnivorous creatures to be dangerous monsters.

Almost all minotaurs live in wild forests and deserted plains, eating whatever they can catch, but a few civilized ones reside in human cities. Some work as guards, mercenaries, or gladiators; others become entertainers, trading on their novelty value, and a few settle into occupations having nothing to do with their unusual background.

Merfolk

Merfolk populate small undersea villages in most of Ytarria's coastal waters, particularly in the south and east. They look approximately human from the waist up and have fish-like tails below; they can breathe in or out of water. Being warm-blooded, merwomen bear live young and suckle them as other mammals do. A lack of common interests typically leads to a certain amount of merfolk indifference to land-dwellers and vice versa, though occasional disputes arise over fishing rights. Regular trade with coastal humans and goblins helps limit such clashes for some tribes, but they tangle with shark men on Yrth as they did on Olokun. However, merfolk consider sea elves good company on occasion.

Olokun: World of Water

This world is the original home of merfolk, shark men, and possibly dolphins and octopus folk. Like Loren'dil, Olokun (ohh-lo-KUHN) saw only one period of transfer for a few years just after A.D. 1050.

Merfolk report that Olokun was predominantly water, dotted with a couple of small continents. However, its dramatic tides daily bared huge areas of land and then flooded them again. Thus, many Olokuun species evolved to breathe air and survive briefly on land despite being aquatic. Though Olokun appeared to be a no-mana world, merfolk and shark men speak of their old gods as regularly taking a hand in worldly affairs.

Loren'dil: The Green World

Halflings, giants, minotaurs, and centaurs hail from this verdant orb. The Banestorm only plagued Loren'dil (LOH-RENN-deel) from A.D. 1050 to around 1075, so its current state is a mystery. Its people knew Loren'dil as an idyllic place with rolling plains interspersed with swathes of dense forest. Even giants from Loren'dil claim some of the trees were as big around as hills and tall enough to disturb the clouds.

Before being brought to Yrth, halflings roosted in the roots and branches of the trees and excelled at hiding from minotaurs and the more dangerous giants. Centaurs faced such threats head-on. Its former natives say Loren'dil was largely low-mana, but this condition may not have been natural. Some centaur bards speak of a vast magical war that depleted Loren'dil's mana and also granted some Loren'dilians – such as minotaurs – the self-defensive capacity to resist magical effects.

Some folk from the green world admit that many races and species they knew back home – like centaurs and pegasi – look like hybrids of animals brought to Ytarria from Earth. Loren'dilians find this very disconcerting; the first centaurs on Yrth were shocked by horses ("Where are his arms? Or his wings? Was he maimed?"), and minotaurs sometimes attack bulls on sight.

Shark Men

Shark men are amphibious dark-scaled humanoids with shark-like heads. While they are most commonly found among the shoals off Sahud, shark men swim other waters as well. Some live deep in the trenches along Ytarria's northern and western shores.

Since other races tend to find shark-man culture and philosophy almost impenetrable, members of this race often are treated as monsters. However, on occasion humans find enough common ground with them to peacefully coexist. This is particularly true of the Sahudese, who call the shark men *samebito*. These imposing creatures sometimes trade with seaside villages, and on truly rare occasions their mages exchange spells with human wizards.

Other Races

Many other sapient species call Ytarria and its oceans home, including ghouls, insect men, medusas, dolphins, and octopus folk. Rare, secretive, and usually quite alien by the standards of mainstream Ytarrian culture, very few have much impact on politics or world events. See Chapter 5 (p. 182) for further details.

Magic

Human immigrants to Yrth were greatly shocked that magic existed here. Some learned this from a friendly elven wizard, some from an angry, startled one. Others met talented goblin mages, while others discovered crude spells by accident. Today, magic is part of everyday life for millions of people.

While spell-based magic is the most common type of supernatural power on Yrth, it's hardly the only one. Mysticism, while generally considered less powerful than true sorcery, also works here and can achieve remarkable results depending on the strength of the wielder's belief. Alchemy also possesses a much firmer magical base in Ytarria, although its practice is far from mature.

Magic on Yrth works as described in the ***GURPS Basic Set,*** Chapter 5, and in ***GURPS Magic.*** Oddly, however, *mystical* abilities (p. 26) don't seem to be constrained by mana levels.

Spell-Based Magic

Spell-based magic works roughly the same way for most people regardless of race, sex, or religion. An elven wizard can teach spells to a devout human Muslim, although their jargon may differ.

The talent for magic – called Magery (p. 183) – is usually hereditary, and magic-capable parents are more likely than non-mages to pass the ability on to their children. Further, no one born without *some* kind of potential can become a mage. However, practical experience can sharpen some would-be adepts' thaumaturgy.

Powerful or dedicated mages naturally seek out opportunities to pursue their interests or exploit their abilities for profit or amusement – though they may be required to serve their nation, in court or battle, first. Many find homes in colleges, researching spells and training students. Others become well-paid servants to the nobility, enchanters creating magic items to order, or consulting wizards in wealthy towns. A few specialize as "magical engineers" or other technical callings. Many wizards deride such careers as dull and beneath their dignity, but commercial spellcasters can command high fees and live in safe, respected comfort.

Rarity of Mages

Less than 2% of humans have Magery, usually at a minimal level (Magery 0). Perhaps a tenth of these manifest higher innate levels or can develop their ability further; few indeed possess the exceptional intelligence and other attributes required to become master wizards. Those who attain Magery levels of 4 or higher are vanishingly rare and potentially the stuff of which legends are made.

Magic Items

Enchanting magic items requires both skill and time. Across Ytarria, most full-time enchanters only find a sufficient market in cities. The unusually talented exceptions draw customers from all over. Other enchanters sidestep the issue by providing rich nobles the prestige of a resident wizard; some are simply so eccentric they refuse to confront the problem pragmatically. Regardless, urban enchanters usually work on commission, only opening their doors by appointment. Only the largest Ytarrian cities support actual magic-item shops.

Everyone knows the best magic weapons and armor come from the dwarves. Their prices are outrageous, but the item will be delivered on time, as specified, and will probably outlast a dozen owners. Elven magic items can embody nearly any spell but are rarely available on the open market. Goblins make dramatic items like fireball wands and experimental "projects," *sometimes* with good results. Humans enchant items of all types, though they prefer practical objects.

Wizards find powerstones (see ***GURPS Magic***, pp. 20, 69) so useful that creating them is simply routine. Many wizards know the spell, and some in large towns or cities occasionally enchant stones for others for supplemental income.

Hence, a hundred-household village or a fief of several smaller villages will produce at most one or two mages per generation. However, one potential spellcaster will likely move to a city, intending to work as battle wizard, court adviser, or teacher. This leaves perhaps a single hedgewitch or wiseman to look after the community. With their promise of novelty and opportunity for training and advancement, cities and towns boast greater proportions: even a small town may have several mages, although many of these will specialize only in low-level healing or divining. A duchy of one or two million people might have 10 or 20 truly great wizards; they will all know each other and are usually famous – or infamous – among the commoners.

Finding and Training Mages

Wizards and witches keep an eye out for untrained magical talent; some regularly use Aura or Divination on people. Others conduct tests, usually involving minor enchanted items which someone with Magery can recognize. Some claim to be able to "sense" fellow mages by their behavior or "the look in their eyes."

A peasant youth identified with Magery will usually train under the nearest trusted hedgewitch or wiseman. No sensible lord objects to this, although he may seek to control a serf-born mage's career: a competent spellcaster earns far more than just another laborer. Mages from other backgrounds may be sent for training to all sorts of places and people, depending on luck and local custom. Established mages almost always zero in on youths with great potential and adopt them as pupils.

The nations of Ytarria all claim the right to supervise magic – mostly to ensure their rulers can exploit it. Local lords may be compensated for losing a serf or villein but cannot deny the state. Rather than illegally hoarding untrained mages for themselves, most lords hire trained wizards to advise them and help defend their castles.

Mana Levels

Ytarria has predominantly normal mana, Caithness and the Great Desert being two large exceptions. Smaller variant-mana areas dot the continent. The Nomad Lands and Ring Islands in particular have wildly varying mana levels, as well as *aspected* areas (see ***GURPS Fantasy***, p. 43).

Mana levels also fluctuate over time in some spots – quickly or slowly, subtly or dramatically. In some places, local wizards can predict and exploit these cycles; elsewhere, even the natives are baffled. Sometimes mana-level changes follow a pattern and sometimes they don't . . . at least not a pattern anyone can recognize. Changes in mana may lead to major political shifts; the largest and most dramatic is the border between Caithness and Megalos (see p. 113.)

Managing Mana Shifts

Fluctuating mana levels provide good scenario "hooks" as long as GMs play fair. If the local mana level plummets every time the PC wizard is about to do something interesting, there *will* be trouble at the table. To save the GM from accusations of megalomania, openly rolled dice may be used to determine random mana shifts. Also, if logic dictates that local NPCs would know about such environmental behavior, characters asking sensible questions should be able to learn about it.

Magery in Nonhumans

Elves are one of Yrth's most magical races, and almost all elves know a few spells. They often act as though they were the appointed keepers of magical wisdom. Dragons also typically mature into powerful wizards. While they certainly know many magical secrets, their miserliness makes them far less willing to share such knowledge.

Dwarves and gnomes develop Magery less commonly than humans but tend to compensate with greater skill and focus. A powerful dwarven wizard might know one entire spell college (see ***GURPS Magic***, p. 11), but only enough to get by in other colleges. Dwarves and gnomes also make a point of learning each spell to mastery before beginning to study the next, and will expect their students (of any race) to do the same.

Being fascinated by magic, goblins produce a few more mages than humans do. Their wizards are almost as obsessive as dwarves but less likely to focus on one area. Even non-mage goblins may learn a spell or two, just in case they end up in a high-mana area.

By contrast, most halflings regard magic as flashy and vulgar; while halflings may have as much Magery in their blood as humans, fewer of them bother studying magic. Still, notable halfling healers exist, and their great wizards are all the more famous for being rare. Similarly, those centaurs with innate Magery may not choose to use it, if they're even aware they possess it. The few centaur wizards, on the other hand, may be very powerful indeed.

Magery seems to be slightly more common among reptile men than humans, though most reptile mages learn only a few spells of obvious utility. Their great wizards, however, are multifaceted and terrifying. Many tribes have a shaman of middling power who handles most of the group's required spellcasting, particularly healing.

Orc mages are scarce, but those who exist ruthlessly exploit their advantage. Giant, hobgoblin, kobold, and ogre wizards are almost unknown – which can give them the advantage of surprise. Minotaur mages are nonexistent, the race being magically resistant. Among other races, shark men and medusas produce the greatest wizards.

Banestorm Spells

The greatest magical phenomenon on Yrth is the Banestorm; naturally, many wizards have tried to control it or harness its power, particularly those mages working for dark elves or the Ministry of Serendipity. They have, by and large, failed, but a few spells have been created to divine information related to various Banestorm effects. These spells all belong to the Gate College (p. B247; ***GURPS Magic***, p. 80).

Detect Banestorm

Information

This spell confirms or denies any current Banestorm activity within the specified range. On a normal failure, the divination is uncertain. A critical failure provides the *wrong* answer.

Cost: See table below.

Distance	*Cost*
1 mile	2
3 miles	3
10 miles	4
30 miles	5
100 miles	6
300 miles	7
1,000 miles	8

Add another 2 to cost per additional factor of 10.
Prerequisites: Magery 1.

Seek Banestorm

Information

This spell tells the caster the *direction* and *approximate distance* of the nearest banestorm. The caster is at a penalty dependent on the actual distance; use the long-distance modifiers on p. B241. Known Banestorm manifestations *cannot* be excluded. Banestorms, as of 2005, are rare; when there is no activity, this spell simply fails.

Cost: 4.
Time to cast: 10 seconds.
Prerequisites: Detect Banestorm.

Identify Newcomer

Information

This spell, when cast on a person or object, tells the caster whether a banestorm brought it to Yrth within the specified period. (Identifying immigrants who have been on Yrth for decades requires substantial energy.)

Cost: See table below.

Period	*Cost*
1 day	3
3 days	4
10 days	5
30 days	6
100 days	7
300 days	8
1,000 days	9

Add another 2 to cost per additional factor of 10.
Time to cast: 1 minute.
Prerequisites: Seek Banestorm.

What isn't generally known is that areas with higher mana than the surrounding territory are often centered on old meteorite impact sites. Every thaumatologist with a decent understanding of geography has noted that the Ring Islands and the three circular bays on the Sahudese coast all have high mana or better. However, almost no one has linked greater levels of magical power to rocks falling from the sky, just because the craters are so huge; meteorites are a known phenomenon, but no one dreams they can be that big! Thaumatologists mostly attribute the formations to volcanoes, God, or a hypothetical tendency of high mana to create large circular holes. Keyhole Bay seems an odd exception, having normal mana throughout. The islands near Min possess only normal mana, but the circle they make has a high-mana spot at its center.

Available Spells

All the ***Basic Set*** spells are widely known, with two broad exceptions. Gate spells are rare and unreliable, and the Necromantic spells are outlawed in most places. The latter ruling is largely moot, since spells which raise the dead are no more than legend to most people, even powerful wizards.

Many of the most powerful and complicated spells from ***GURPS Magic*** (particularly Mental/Very Hard spells) are only known to a few mages; several such incantations are as yet undiscovered in Ytarria.

Also, some spells don't work as well as others. Thanks to the Banestorm, Yrth is a "Sargasso" when it comes to planar travel; getting here is much easier than leaving. The following Gate College spells have a *-25 penalty* when cast on Yrth: Banish (when used on travelers from normal alternate worlds, rather than, say, demons), Create Gate (when used for anything besides long-distance travel), Hide Object, Phase, Phase Other, Planar Visit, Plane Shift, Plane Shift Other, Sanctuary, and Scry Gate (if the gate leads to another time or plane). An attempt to use Planar Summons to bring something from Yrth fails outright if the spell doesn't specify an individual entity, and is at the standard -25 penalty even if it does.

The following spells have the same penalty, *and* no one on Yrth has even conceived of them: Accelerate Time, Rapid Journey (when used to travel through time), Slow Time, Suspend Time, Time Out, Timeport, Timeport Other, Timeslip, and Timeslip Other. There may be ways to reduce these penalties, but what they are and who knows them is up to the GM.

Yrth mages continue the "art" of maintaining their power base by suppressing technology (see p. 5). Seek Earth can sometimes locate sulfur or saltpeter in gunpowder, but this requires some knowledge of its recipe – the very secret so carefully suppressed. The spell may also find innocent quantities of these substances; as saltpeter forms under dunghills, these mistakes can be very annoying. Some mages have tried, with no luck, to develop a specific Seek Gunpowder or Seek Explosives spell. The Ministry of Serendipity *has* created Seek Machine spells for TL3 to TL5 (virtually the only Tech College spells known on Yrth), but few wizards know them. Also, since spell researchers can't keep up with Earth's technological advances, these spells rarely locate devices recently arrived via the Banestorm. Other Tech spells *might* work perfectly well on Yrth . . . but they are almost entirely unknown.

Magical Artifacts

Generations of professional wizards have manufactured many minor magical items by using well-understood principles and spells. However, legends speak of major plot catalysts and historically significant mementos referred to as *artifacts*. Some stories describe them as ancient creations, most likely spun into being by pre-Banestorm elven or dwarven enchanters, perhaps during a vaguely remembered great age of magic. Other near-mythical items are tied to names from more recent history. For example, virtually anything associated with Simon Menelaus (p. 10) is supposed to embody great power.

Some artifacts are "simply" powerful magic items; they could be recreated by a sufficiently adept and knowledgeable wizard, given enough time. Others are as important for their historical associations as for their magical properties. Some, however, were made using lost magical methods or come from universes where magic functions differently. Others may be the work of godlike beings. However, everything about an artifact should be the subject of speculation and legend, much of it incomplete, confused, or just plain untrue. As plot hooks and campaign-climax generators, artifacts should be approached crookedly, by rumor, with numerous red herrings, seemingly insurmountable challenges, and reversals of fortune.

Some Legendary Artifacts

The Bow of Kirtaiel belonged to an ancient elven hero and is said to grant the bearer access to centuries of elven wisdom. If it exists, it's probably held in some shrine deep in the forests of Ytarria. Dark elves aggressively pursue rumors about it.

The Raft of Worlds looks like a rickety seagoing raft, but it can apparently both fly and teleport. Some wizards believe it allows planar travel away from Yrth and that it may have originated in another universe. Accounts differ about where it was last seen – most mention either the city of Megalos, Tredroy, or somewhere in Sahud – but several state it was recently found, only to vanish again almost immediately.

The Sword of 'Antar is a pitch-black, unnaturally sharp blade, probably made of meteoric iron, which some Muslims claim was forged on Earth. A succession of noted warriors on both sides of the Mages' War are reliably known to have carried it. However, legends suggest its greatest power is to raise the mana level in its immediate vicinity. Unfortunately, the stories also imply it slowly poisons its bearers, the last of whom is thought to have hidden it or broken its magic after concluding it was evil.

The Throne of Kiskovann is the subject of numerous dwarven ballads. Said to be the work of a dwarf king, it reportedly allowed users to perceive events across space and possibly even time. It was lost in the chaos of the Banestorm's early days, but no self-respecting dwarf believes it could have been destroyed.

The Wand of Yeknayatt was made by a powerful goblin mage, probably as a prank. It can cast scores of spells but requires the user to "remove" various of his body parts. These bits can supposedly be reattached later – somehow – but even so, the Wand's user has to be either dedicated or slightly mad. (This whole legend may be a goblin joke, but extremely reliable records attest to the wand's existence.)

Mysticism

Some people of Yrth are born with minor, almost shamanic gifts, represented in game terms by advantages like Channeling, Magic Resistance, Medium, Oracle, or Spirit Empathy. Such abilities are, broadly, akin to Magery; they represent an exceptional sensitivity (or an innate *resistance*) to supernatural forces, and perhaps a little natural talent for manipulating them. Mystic skills may prove useful or disturbing. Others may regard the

empowered individual as blessed by God or Allah – or uncanny and cursed. Compared to practiced wizards with many familiar spells in their tomes, people with unfocused and usually untrained mystical promise often barely register on Yrth's radar. Still, some research-oriented mages like to employ mystics as assistants.

The Mystics

Religious faith or mystical disciplines taught in religious context promise a more flexible array of non-spell powers. Such abilities, however, are definitely *not* the only form of supernatural might available to priests or religious scholars; many study spell-based magic, and some of them are extremely effective wizards. Indeed, religious leaders and teachers often trust "priest-wizards" (p. 214) more than they do mystics. Priest-wizards are usually sensible individuals who at least try to work within the rules of their religion. The often wild-eyed mystics pursue dangerous ideas of their own, giving their own meaning to the term "eccentric." On the other hand, unlike spells, mystical abilities often seem to emanate from beyond the wielder, perhaps demonstrating divine powers greater than secular magic.

For their part, wizards are divided as to the nature of mystical powers. Some accept that such talents originate with the divine. Others believe they are a badly understood form of magic; even if they are associated with higher powers, they could be incorporated into existing magical theories. A few daring "atheistic" wizards even mutter that mystics are nothing but "deformed" or "incomplete" mages, who, having avoided proper training, find their power bursting through in a partial form. The main problem with this theory is that there seems to be no connection at all between mystical abilities and mana levels. Something else appears to be driving them. What, no one knows.

The more immediate issue with crediting such powers to God is the question of *which* God. That this question may not be relevant is a concept that greatly disturbs religious leaders of all creeds, when it occurs to them. These abilities appear to be granted to all sorts of people: Christians of differing sects, Sunni and Shi'ite Muslims, and others. If mystical talent comes from God, He is granting power to people with inherently contradictory ideas about Him. As a result, theologians often cannot help being suspicious of these abilities. Some devout mystics say people of other beliefs who *seem* to share their powers are actually diabolically inspired or deluded, and that Hell uses such trickery to confuse mortals. Others argue that God's true purposes are ineffable and such questions are pointless and even blasphemous. Indeed, some mystics are more ecumenical than many mainstream theologians.

Simple Faith

Straightforward faith, goal-directed but not consciously manipulated, can achieve remarkable effects. This is often attributed to direct divine aid. Wielders of simple faith tend to be humble, but the devout may celebrate them as emissaries of Heaven – just as enemies of their faith will reject them as minions of Hell. Atheistic wizards explain such effects as being raw magic, governed by faith rather than skill, taking whatever form the wielder wishes. Still, it is rarely wise to suggest this within earshot of a true believer.

In game terms, such power takes form as the True Faith advantage. A few characters with this may *also* have the Healing advantage with the Faith Healing enhancement, occasionally modified by the Disease Only limitation. Some possess Higher Purpose as well. If other supernatural advantages fit the GM's general image of "saintly" powers, he may permit characters with True Faith to use these advantages with the Pact limitation.

True Faith is *rare*; while many people on Yrth are devout, even fanatical, absolute commitment is more than strong belief. Players *may* take this advantage, but GMs should note their characters will have to operate under strict behavior limits. Taking True Faith may well be prohibited if its presence is likely to disrupt the campaign.

Incidentally, True Faith is *not* incompatible with Magery, but the combination is *exceptionally* rare. A mage with all-powerful faith *may* believe that spell use is lawful, but many feel using secular magic shows lack of confidence in divine providence.

Disciplines

Devotees of different "mystical disciplines" often insist they have nothing in common, but to a point, their powers work the same. They all pursue direct communion with God, the universe, the Eternal – a higher principle, in essence. They hone this relationship through mental or physical training, study of strange ideas or riddles, meditation, and occasionally other consciousness-altering techniques. While this isn't necessarily religious behavior in the conventional sense, mystics tend to have strong convictions about how the universe works and believe their powers are God-given gifts.

In game terms, such characters must have Disciplines of Faith and gain relevant special advantages with the Pact limitation. Such advantages are usually but not necessarily of the supernatural variety. The powers available are determined by the exact disciplines the character pursues; hence, each power is associated with some mystical group or school.

On the same basis, some people believe such powers are attainable by anyone with the dedication to pursue appropriate study and accept the associated privations. Most mystics say the source of their power can distinguish sincerity from the cynical pursuit of advantage. Still, some of them do behave in rather strange and not *obviously* devout ways. It should be noted that mystics do *not* usually have Clerical Investment; they tend to be too unconventional and concerned with the pursuit of truth to function as priests. Notable Yrthian mystical schools include the An'Fo'Tama Buddhists (p. 80), the Christian Friedrichites (p. 62), and the Sufi order of Julnari dervishes (p. 67). For their character templates and available advantages, see *Mystic Lenses*, p. 213.

Alchemy

Yrthian alchemy represents chemistry's magical aspect but is not a mature "science" by any means. A few immigrant chemists from Earth have tried their hands and found alchemy maddeningly *bizarre*. It doesn't help that Ytarrian natural philosophers tend to hoard their discoveries. However, alchemy answers a few needs that spell-based magic can't (see ***GURPS Magic***), so there is always a market for it. Non-mages can also pursue this art. See p. 51 for information on guilds governing alchemy, and p. 206 for details about skills typical Yrthian alchemists possess.

Magic and Religion

The largest conflicts in Ytarria have usually been about faith or race, but the relationship between magic and religion has seen its share of battles. Among the three most popular faiths, the Ytarrian Christian Church and Sunni Islam hold that white magic is permitted by God. This usually amounts to wary acceptance of most magery except necromancy and certain related spells. Ytarrian Shi'ite Islam, by contrast, states that magic in the service of Islam *may* be forgivable but in general is sinful. Scores of sects and cults reject such pragmatic thinking, teaching that all magic is evil and all mages are corrupt. However, smaller groups propose the opposite view: magic as a sacred gift.

Some people possess the aptitude and grace to utilize both traditional spellcasting and god-given "mystical" talents (see p. 27). Others bargain with demons (p. 53) for power. Most wizards, however, are simply using a tool and practicing a trade, with no inherent religious significance.

Church-Taught Wizards

Several orders in the Ytarrian Church not only condone magic but expect clergymen who are also wizards to study and teach it. In al-Wazif, learning magic is a more secular pursuit, though some mullahs are also spellcasters. In al-Haz, a "holy wizard" is almost a contradiction in terms.

The first spells any clergy learn almost invariably involve healing. Laying on hands to cure ills is a remarkably effective way to generate goodwill for one's faith. For similar reasons, church-taught wizards often know spells from the Food college (see ***GURPS Magic***). Those who preach or do missionary work use Sound spells to project their voices and translation spells to transcend language barriers. Many are adept at Banish as well (the only Necromantic spell most religions allow).

Magical Diseases

On Yrth, magic allows diseases to do things they can't on Earth. The most infamous is *vampirism* (p. 201), which is certainly contagious and probably viral. Bodily fluids such as blood, saliva, and semen transmit the affliction. However, local mana levels may change the disease's behavior, and rumors occasionally circulate about people becoming vampires through deliberate acts of self-damnation. Vampirism can apparently infect any living intelligent being. The contagion completely transforms the victim's metabolism, destroying many functions and replacing them with magical effects. This technically kills the victim; thus, vampires cannot survive long in areas without mana. Vampirism cannot be cured by any method known to conventional science or Ytarrian magic.

Lycanthropy, by contrast, is hereditary, and thus likely a genetic disorder (see *The Genetics of Magery*, p. 29). This disease can be inflicted by a severe magical backfire or a powerful magical curse. In either case, victims will almost certainly pass it on to their children. Some families have had werebeasts (p. 201) in their lineage for centuries.

It is unclear whether ghouls (p. 200) are simply another intelligent race or are suffering from a magical disease or genetic disorder. If it's a magical disease, it doesn't prevent them from breeding, and is passed from mother to child. If it's a genetic disorder, it breeds true.

GMs may introduce other diseases with equally strange effects. For example, a mildly contagious disease which causes growth, increased ST, and decreased IQ could be one explanation for the "cousins" of orcs and goblins called ogres and hobgoblins. If such a disease were to jump species, it could produce monstrous elves or humans.

See Chapter 5 for vampiric and lycanthropic templates.

Magic and Science

Science and technology work on Yrth, but strange things can happen when magic comes into play. Some magical effects behave like physical phenomena; for example, mana can be compared to energy. Others are erratic or defy conventional ideas of cause and effect. Magic appears to be able to access a "consciousness" in the structure of things which science would deny exists. For example,

The Genetics of Magery

Ytarrian philosophers lack any real conception of genetics. They recognize that traits can be passed down, but their theories on why or how this happens are vague at best. A few have studied ideas obtained from Banestorm victims, but these are generally garbled and difficult to resolve with even the idea of magic.

Hence, patterns of inheritance among "magical" traits have never been systematically studied. Such effects are notoriously complex and easily modified by obscure environmental influences. However, if a broadminded team of TL8+ geneticists spent long enough on Yrth, using excellent instruments and keeping around a good set of bodyguards, they might deduce a few precepts.

Magery, for instance, probably derives from one or more gene complexes, many of them recessive. This trait is susceptible to training and socialization, sometimes in unpredictable ways. Someone whose parents and grandparents are all mages will *probably* be one as well, and usually a powerful one.

Lycanthropy (see p. 200) apparently represents a deeply weird set of recessive genes, many of which a geneticist would label junk DNA – until they start expressing themselves in higher-mana areas. Stories suggest magical "curses" can impose lycanthropy on normal humans; other evidence indicates powerful magic can rewrite a being's genome. The expression of these genes can be suppressed rarely, though the "cure" is usually magical itself and often not permanent.

Then again, a scientist might eventually decide the whole thing is incomprehensible and dismiss all the above theories as desperate, pointless rationalizations . . .

invoking a spell does not seem to require the caster to consciously inform the mana involved about any arbitrary conditions present. Nor does he need to somehow "explain" any concepts to anyone or anything to get what he wants from the spell. The magical law of sympathy often depends on symbolic relationships which only a conscious mind should be able to perceive. Still, those who study the nature of wizardry will probably be arguing where the magician ends and magic begins until the end of time. Never mind where Magery really comes into the equation.

In general, magic on Yrth *expands* on science but does not *replace* it. Fire spells seem to defy the laws of thermodynamics, but the fires they start behave like any other fires, and can be extinguished in the same way. Magical healing is faster and more reliable than natural recovery but still seems to use biological processes: cell-stitching severed tissue and destroying viruses. Occasionally, magical theory evokes ideas about the universe which a 21st-century Earth scientist would condemn as outdated or just plain wrong, such as the idea that four elements – fire, water, earth, and air – form the basis of the world. But such visualizations can be seen as metaphors or systems of categorization, rather than direct contradictions of science. Magic often seems to defy the law of conservation of energy, but wizards are the first to acknowledge that it accesses a form of ambient energy which is no less real than fire or electricity . . . just less evident.

There is in fact a whole science of magic: *thaumatology*. It's not terribly advanced on Yrth; the newcomers haven't had time to develop it properly, and the native races either don't have much interest or have no concept of what Earth calls the scientific method. If anyone else possesses such knowledge, they probably either don't realize they have it, or don't want to share it. However, human thaumatology does produce useful results, and a few researchers have created new spells and items unmatched by any elven wizard or dwarven craftsman.

It will probably be decades or even centuries before thaumatologists succeed in integrating magic into a scientific world-view. Such a goal is only complicated when Yrthian wizards and churchmen remain hostile to even the most abstract scientific ideas that arrive from Earth. They suspect these could lead all too rapidly to the technological revolution they fear. Hence, while modes of thought on Yrth are more "rationalistic" than they were on 12th-century Earth, there are few local philosophers who can be called scientists in the modern sense.

Technology

While much of Ytarria is still mired in a variety of scientific misconceptions, local research has made a number of strides beyond standard medieval thinking. Scholars accept that Yrth goes around its sun rather than vice versa, and Newtonian gravity is understood on an abstract level. Some use magic to improve their observations and have a working grasp of the scientific method, complete with repeatable experiments and peer review.

However, such ideas rarely spread beyond the universities. Aralaise seafarers use astronomy for navigation, and some practical medicine makes use of germ theory and even inoculation concepts (see p. 32), but most Ytarrian peasants and knights have only hazy ideas about the shape of the heavens or the function of their internal organs. The presence of magic also often renders experiments less reliable; observers can influence results without realizing what they're doing.

As of 2005, most of Ytarria is Tech Level 3, comparable to medieval Europe. Some regions like the Nomad Lands are TL2 or lower, while others, like Araterre, are early TL4 (without gunpowder). See the country descriptions for the tech levels of each area of Ytarria. Knights in plate armor and trained war-mages rule the battlefield. The finest weapons are made of steel, and the best ranged weapons are bows, crossbows, and lightning bolts.

Most TL4 technologies in Ytarria are small improvements on medieval technologies. Improved windmills often have belt drives. Some stagecoaches have spring suspensions, and ships use advanced rigging for better tacking. However, a few specialties have made quantum leaps. Clockwork devices, while not widely used, can be bought in many cities. Movable type is known but closely regulated. The wealthy have access to crude microscopes, telescopes, and, if needed, eyeglasses. Still, powerful factions protecting their own interests deliberately slow the advance of science, and many Yrthians' comfortable reliance on magic only cements this state of affairs.

Note, though, that restrictions on science and technology, while broad and sometimes ruthlessly enforced, can't be universal, even if the rulers and wizards want them that way. While gunpowder remains anathema and the printing press is kept under tight rein (see below), many less dramatic inventions and devices have been permitted or ignored. See p. 32.

Still, barring a revolution in thought beyond the dreams of the underground engineers (p. 54), Yrth science, like local technology, is unlikely to advance much beyond TL4. On the other hand, with continuing Banestorm incursions, almost anything may be *possible*.

The Suppression of Gunpowder

People brought to Yrth by the Banestorm have introduced gunpowder several times, and natives have invented it at least once. The knowledge was suppressed every time. Currently, talented mages are the only ones who know how one person can do more than an arrow's worth of damage at range. Wizards fear "gonnes" would remove a major foundation stone from their power base, and leading nobles and churchmen have heard worrying reports of conditions on Earth which seem to be the fault of ready firearm availability. This policy of suppression originated in Megalos but spread to Muslim lands when Earth reports seemed to link guns and superior technology with Muslim defeats. The rulers of Sahud may share this outlook, though it's just as likely they regard explosives as inelegant, comparable to brash magic, and hence *impolite*. Even some Banestorm victims support the ban out of dislike for firearms. Thus, all but the most liberal social leaders are vehemently opposed to the introduction of gunpowder.

However, this policy is not (apparently) the work of a monolithic, continent-wide conspiracy. Rather, it is the result of an informal alliance between wizard guilds, nobles, and church leaders. In Megalos, the Ministry of Serendipity (see p. 88) maintains the ban with the support of various allies; elsewhere, no single body is in charge. Several factions, including the Ministry, may know how to make gunpowder themselves; they may be

Underground Engineering

Small cells of "underground engineers" (p. 54) exist all across Ytarria. Most of them seek to preserve knowledge and, ultimately, to convince the world to adopt new technologies. A few prefer to hold their advantages close for personal financial gain. Others with neither altruistic nor selfish motives just enjoy tinkering. What they all have in common is an intense desire not to be murdered or mind-wiped for their knowledge.

Some of these renegade technologists learn full TL4 skills. If they have access to hidden workshops, they may carry TL4 equipment. Hence, many have one level of High TL. Some may also have one level of the Gadgeteer advantage. See p. 215 for further template information. However, such advantages are not universal; some are simply skilled TL3 craftsmen with grand dreams. A few own firearms, but this is dangerous in more ways than one; most prefer to keep such weapons in secret armories, against the day when they can be openly used.

A successful cell of engineers may be able to create simple TL5 devices such as steam engines and electrical generators. One or two groups have constructed hot-air balloons. Very few, however, have advanced much beyond that, though portable radios brought in by Banestorm immigrants sometimes pick up faint signals . . .

interested in preserving their monopoly, not in eliminating gunpowder outright. It is not unknown for rival groups of enforcers to come to blows.

To add to the confusion, in some human cities, interfering dragons encourage the ban. Very few men know this, and none know the dragons' reasons. Perhaps they possess prophetic powers or knowledge of other human-dominated universes; this may lead them to realize how dangerous advanced weaponry could be to them. Or perhaps those particular dragons are just conservative meddlers.

The average Ytarrian doesn't even know gunpowder exists. Slightly better-informed folk have been taught that it's the Devil's work and that they should inform a wizard or priest immediately if they encounter it. Any gunpowder use that isn't utterly secret will be reported to a wizard sooner or later. The preferred and sanctioned disposal method is a fireball. Those responsible are usually imprisoned. and are lucky to be released with nothing worse than holes in their memory.

In Caithness, although rulers and wizards inherited the basic Megalan prejudices, those in power have a hard time suppressing gunpowder. Wizards are scarcer, some priests suspect change might not be a bad thing, and gunpowder works fine in a low-mana area. The current civil war makes enforcement even more difficult. The wizards' greatest fear is that one side will decide cannons would give them an unbeatable advantage – in which case, they might feel obliged to join the other, regardless how they feel about that side otherwise.

Realism, Plausibility, and Coherence

Yrth is not intended to be entirely *realistic*. Even apart from the existence of magic and planar travel, many minor physics violations are embedded in the setting: the legs of large giants shouldn't be able to support them. However, interaction with the world will largely reflect player expectations. Rocks fall, swords are deadly, and food is nutritious. Well, it *can* be nutritious.

Yrth is also not 100% *plausible*. Some spells would likely have a greater impact on society than is assumed here, and the nearly complete suppression of gunpowder would probably be impossible in the real world. Making gunpowder is surprisingly easy; the basic process can be taught in an hour. Most of these implausibilities exist to preserve Yrth as a recognizable quasi-medieval fantasy setting. Too much magic or science, and the world changes into something radically different.

However, Yrth *is* intended to be *coherent*. Events on one end of the continent relate to events on the other end. The past connects to the present day. Cause and effect apply. When traveling from place to place, characters will encounter a wide variety of societies and peoples, but difference does not indicate randomness. All cultures of Yrth have some sense of history; no matter how intelligent, they behave as they do today based largely on beliefs set by experience.

Transportation

On land, almost everyone travels by foot, mount, or animal-drawn stagecoach, wagon, or cart. In big cities, humans also pull rickshaws. Yrthians predominantly ride horses and camels, and gear includes the saddle and stirrup. A few urbanites have suggested animal-pulled trolleys on rails, but traditionalists are resisting. In Megalos and other developed regions, the best roads are dressed stone, allowing for rapid travel. Elsewhere they are still dirt, or, when it rains, mud. A loaded wagon can travel 30 miles a day, allowing for rest, or 40 miles on good roads.

Big riverboats, powered by sails, oars, or draught animals on the bank, ply Yrth's rivers. On the oceans, sailing vessels rule. The function of a ship determines its size, shape, and speed. A merchant may operate locally or over long distances; many work established shore routes. A ship that only sails up and down the coastline is usually much smaller than one designed to regularly cross open sea. Cargo ships sacrifice speed for carrying capacity, while pirates favor fast, maneuverable craft with smaller holds. With good weather, an average sailing vessel can manage 70 miles a day.

Ships are categorized by their number of masts. *Sloops* are small, with only one mast and a triangular sail. They rarely venture more than two weeks away from land. Pirates prefer larger sloops, over 20 feet, which are fast, maneuverable, and can carry enough cutthroats to overwhelm any likely prey. Most two-masted *brigs* are larger, broader, and slower, but some possess speed that belies their bulk, chasing pirates down. With enough provisions, a brig could cross an ocean. Three-masted *ships* range considerably in size, from barely larger than sloops to the largest vessels afloat. They ferry cargo, carry passengers, and serve in naval battle. Merchant ships, being cargo-heavy, have the worst lines and speed. Warships have slightly better lines but aren't much faster due to heavy bracing (in case of ramming) and their higher crenelated "castles" fore and aft, where archers or mages are stationed.

At the end of the 16th century, after the French immigrants of 1550 had adapted to their new world, the Aralaise were building ships comparable to those of only a few decades earlier on Earth; the most common vessel in the rest of Ytarria was still the single-masted cog. The newcomers could literally sail circles around them. As of 2005, the Aralaise have ships comparable to late 17th or early 18th-century Earth vessels, albeit without gunports. These designs benefit from improvements over their predecessors but still resemble them greatly. The rest of the world remains at least a century behind.

Medicine

Much healing on Yrth is accomplished with magic, which can cure most illnesses and almost all injuries. For those without access to sorcery, the best solutions are herbal remedies, amputation, and prayer. Non-magical anesthesia is erratic and primitive; doctors may employ opium or similar drugs. Amputees often sport metal hooks and wooden legs. Some healers still believe in the four humors and bleeding their patients, but those ideas are vanishing fast.

One new idea, now widespread, is germ theory, though most people are unclear about what germs *are,* believing them to be "demonets." Still, many healers wash their hands in boiled water before treating their patients, saving thousands of lives. People also understand the role which animals like rats play in the spread of some diseases.

Experimental doctors have even attempted vaccination in areas threatened by plague, with some minor success. This proves most useful when dealing with those few diseases which are magically resistant. Few treatments for them exist beyond bed rest and good food. (The red twist, which causes inflamed joints, is one such. Magical attempts to cure it are at -5 to -10, depending on the strain.) Blood typing isn't properly understood, so transfusions are dangerous and at best experimental. Many folk remedies have antibiotic properties, but the principles involved are still obscure.

While Ytarria overall is a lot healthier than medieval Europe, the average human lifespan is significantly shorter than in the First World nations of 21st-century Earth, mostly due to infant mortality. A human who makes it out of childhood is quite likely to see 60, but one who makes it to 80 has done very well.

Printing

Block printing, which involves carving or casting one plate for each page, is well known on Yrth. Since the plates can't be reused, the process is abominably slow and requires exacting attention. Still, block printers ply their trade in all cities and most towns.

The theory of movable type was first brought to Yrth in the 11th century by two Sahudese originally from China. They had no opportunity to practice their skills, but they preserved the idea and passed it on to their children. Today movable-type printing is common in Sahud; nearly every clan has its own press. However, it never spread to Megalos, partly because of Sahudese insularity, partly due to Megalan assumptions of superiority.

Therefore, it wasn't until the 16th century that movable type came to the Empire. Many Banestorm immigrants who arrived in Araterre knew of it, and some were actual printers. By the time of the Purification of the Isles, several were engaged in their old business. The Megalans first saw movable-type printing as relatively harmless. They were used to a world where books were rare, commissioned and owned only by the powerful. Thus, the technology had spread to the mainland before the Imperial authorities realized it could be used to print subversive literature cheaply and in bulk.

For roughly 200 years the Empire tried to control or suppress movable type. To a greater or lesser extent, other governments did likewise. All had limited success. By the late 18th century, the Empire settled for supporting strong scriveners' guilds, which included scribes as well as printers. The guilds still do not permit printing subversive texts, and they make full use of Imperial support to discourage printers from operating outside official purview. A strong traditional streak in most such guilds also guarantees protection for those who create books by hand or using block type. Thus, not every town that could support a movable-type press actually has one. However, at least one exists in every major city, usually along with one or two unlicensed presses that print heresy, treason, or pornography (often all in one pamphlet; gossip about the sex lives of powerful bishops sells *very* well).

Banestormed Ideas

Despite the existence of powerful mind-altering mages dedicated to the maintenance of the status quo, it's virtually impossible to stop new ideas from eventually percolating through to Yrth. In many cases, the mages simply don't know what to look for.

Ideas are most likely to make it to Yrth and spread if they are simple, useful, known to lots of people on Earth, and don't *obviously* pose a threat to those in power. Some examples include basic sanitation, the Heimlich maneuver, the fact that smoking is bad for you, a little atomic theory, heliocentric astronomy with elliptical orbits, primitive fingerprinting, Renaissance theatrical drama, perspective in art, various styles of music, and the modern novel. Fundamentally political ideas (democracy, human rights, communism, socialism) usually meet with more resistance from the powers that be, but people are still vigorously trying to spread them. Anyone from a high-tech world with an understanding of memetics would find this whole process intensely fascinating.

Major Languages

The Christian nations of Yrth speak *Anglish*, a language evolved from medieval English with heavy outside influences, mostly Norman-French. Northern tribesmen speak a related tongue, *Northland*, with substantial Germanic features. Most inhabitants of Araterre speak *Aralaise*, a heavily accented form of Anglish, but some remote villages use *Old Aralaise*, a distinct language resembling 16th-century French. Some outlying island villages speak Asian languages such as Balinese.

The Islamic nations have retained a relatively pure classical Arabic, partly thanks to devout Koranic study among the literate classes. The written language is nearly identical to Earth Arabic, though the spoken tongue has drifted.

Latin – specifically, medieval church Latin – is spoken and written by Christian scholars, clergymen, and some Megalan nobles. Among themselves, Jews speak *Ladino*, a language closely related to Spanish but written in Hebrew characters, and use biblical Hebrew as a liturgical tongue; they have carefully preserved both in forms brought through the Banestorm. The Sahudese language has departed so far from its multiple roots that it would be completely incomprehensible to anyone from Earth.

Border regions often develop simple pidgins for convenience; the "patois" of Tredroy (a mix of Anglish, Arabic, and various old Earth words) is quite well-developed.

Language Lessons

Most of Yrth's living languages have drifted significantly from their origins; outside the Islamic lands, a Banestorm victim from Earth will not be able to get by immediately. Anglish, Northland, and Aralaise are too remote from either modern or medieval Earth tongues for knowledge of any such to help, although anyone who knows any Western European languages will recognize some of the roots and structures.

A native, modern French speaker gets Old Aralaise at Broken level (written and spoken) for free. Anyone versed in writing Classical Arabic has the same level of literacy in Ytarrian Arabic; anyone with knowledge of *spoken* Earth Arabic (classical or modern) can speak the Yrth version at one less level of competence for free.

Also, native-level knowledge of Anglish or Aralaise indicates familiarity with the other language at accented levels. Anglish or Northland at native level translates to broken use of the other tongue. Characters with native-level Anglish or Yrth Arabic can learn Tredroy patois without a teacher as quickly as if they did have one; it's *meant* to be easy.

Nonhuman Speech

Most nonhumans speak their own languages, but those encountered in human territory likely know the appropriate human tongue. Only kobolds and orcs lack script, though reptile men rarely write anything down. Few literate kobolds or orcs can be found, so if any of them have tried designing a written form of their speech, no one knows about it. However, some human scholars have studied these two races, usually transcribing their tongues into Anglish or Arabic scripts; characters "literate" in those languages use one of those transcriptions if they write at all.

While there is only one *written* form of the elven language, there are dozens of local *spoken* dialects; anyone who speaks one of these can be treated as knowing any other at one level less. The language which humans usually call "Elvish" is in fact a formal trade/diplomatic form, which most elves themselves only speak at "accented" levels. If a human learns it to "native" level, elves will tend to be both genuinely impressed and politely amused. Dwarves speak a single language, seemingly preserving its consistency by sheer stubbornness, although there are regional accents.

Sexual Morality

As in many human societies, people on Ytarria often combine strict *theoretical* ideas about sexual behavior with practical flexibility. At best, they are pragmatic and broadly tolerant of minor lapses; at worst, they are blatant hypocrites. Some people suspect that many or *most* peasant girls are pregnant when they get married, while the aristocratic ideal of "courtly love" is notoriously used as an excuse for flagrant misbehavior. Male homosexuality is seen as a *behavior*, not a lifestyle, throughout Ytarria; theoretically a great sin and subject to severe punishment, it's actually ignored much of the time. It is stigmatized if public, but quite easy to keep quiet. Female homosexuality is even more invisible. However, in situations where the inheritance of property, let alone titles or power, are at stake, any uncertainty about the parentage of a child is seen as a threat to social order, and so adultery may be punished severely (if erratically).

Muslim societies are somewhat stricter; however, while the upper classes sometimes have enclosed harems, most women have rather more practical freedom than outsiders think, provided that they dress modestly, and there is a long and rich tradition of mostly chaste romantic love. The Sahudese combine a lot of formal morality with their usual complicated rules and primary concern with "face." Northmen are less moralistic than their neighbors in some ways, but obsessed with personal and family honor; romances in the Nomad Lands sometimes lead to multi-generation blood feuds.

Magical or alchemical contraception and disease control sometimes serve to moderate problems arising from all this, but there are too many fake "charms" on the market, and real cures and preventives aren't always available – partly because such things are often regarded as not only undignified but so immoral that wizards accused of peddling them may be run out of town, or worse.

Arts and Entertainment

The Banestorm deposited representatives of dozens of human cultures on Ytarria, along with members of several nonhuman races with cultures of their own. As usual, the development of civilization then involved developments in the arts, which have been further augmented by oddities and fragments arriving via resurgent Banestorms over the years. Hence, this world has a rich and varied cultural stew. While human societies on Ytarria are more or less "medieval," local forms are more than mere imitations of archaic Earth art.

Many of the arts received a boost when a flood of Banestorm victims arrived in Araterre in the 16th century. These included many people who *had* seen sophisticated theatrical performances and Renaissance art, and heard refined European polyphonic music, and who indeed brought examples with them. To this day, Araterre preserves a name for cultural sophistication at odds with its image as a brawling, swashbuckling region. Indeed, Aralaise arts, especially literature and drama, are sometimes regarded by non-Aralaise audiences as *too* sophisticated and refined.

However, Yrth's acknowledged capital of the performing arts is the city of Tredroy (p. 142), which supports a large, permanent theater, home to a number of companies of entertainers – musicians, actors, and dancers. The arts are so much a part of Tredroyan life that senior churchmen act as patrons to performers, whereas in many other places, entertainers are regarded as vagabonds and rogues.

Meanwhile, Sahud, as ever, goes its own way. Even if they know the language, visitors find the local arts either weirdly simplistic or incomprehensibly abstract. This, of course, reinforces Sahudese suspicions that all foreigners are barbarians.

Players interested in running characters who sing, dance, act or sculpt for their supper should look at the Entertainer template (p. 206).

Theater

When the Banestorm first brought humans to Yrth, they had very little in the way of theatre. Europeans had some copies of the works of the great ancient playwrights, and a limited tradition of mostly religious folk-theater; Muslims lacked even that, as their fine tradition of storytelling filled much the same role. Some ideas about dramatic performance arrived in Sahud from Asia, but much was lost in the chaos.

However, once Yrth had substantial towns and cities, a theatrical tradition soon developed. Later arrivals through the Banestorm helped considerably; although few were actors or writers, many of them could at least *describe* theatrical developments. Static theaters in large towns, touring companies taking plays round smaller communities, and private companies employed to provide amusement for great nobles, all evolved and still exist. The theaters now have centuries of tradition; when a company needs a novelty to amuse an audience which has seen everything in their repertoire, or a patron demands something on a specific theme, they can raid whole libraries of half-forgotten works. This reduces the need for new plays, although good writers can usually find employment, if only translating and updating old material.

The typical Yrthian urban theater is similar to a conventional modern

type on Earth – a rectangular hall with a stage and proscenium arch at one end, and often a gallery at the other. However, members of the touring companies are well used to working on village greens, in inn courtyards, and in nobles' dining-halls, and Christian "mystery plays" continue to be performed by amateurs during town festivals in similar ad hoc spaces. Anyone considering playing a troupe actor, masquer, or other theatrical character should consider the associated Code of Honor (p. 186).

Musical Theater

The concept of opera either arrived through the Banestorm or evolved independently on Yrth – quite possibly both – but remains a minority taste, because the facilities to stage such things are rarely available outside Tredroy and the city of Megalos. The word is now used on Yrth to cover everything from massive spectacles to light musical comedies; such "operas" also incorporate spoken dialogue and dances.

Musical Arts

Ytarrian music is enormously varied – from folk songs played by solitary minstrels to moderately complex ensemble pieces. Many types of instrument developed on Earth since the Middle Ages have come through the Banestorm, and other variants have been invented locally, although the key systems on local woodwind

instruments are usually relatively simple, and the modern Earth piano has never been recreated; keyboard players have to make do with harpsichords and church organs.

While there are a few orchestras, none of them can match an Earth symphony orchestra; they typically consist of 10-20 musicians at most. In fact, most musical ensembles are fairly small; only the wealthiest patrons can afford to sponsor and organize anything larger, and hence, little music is written for such groups. The most sophisticated pieces are typically played by a group of four to six musicians employed by a noble household.

While Yrth has its own great composers, countless melodies from Earth have also arrived here in the heads of musically competent Banestorm victims, who sometimes make a good living by performing such novelties. Some survive more or less intact – the name of Mozart is known to every Cardien who considers himself cultured – while others have been garbled or adapted to local tastes and conditions. Songs may also survive the transfer, although incomprehensible references in the words may lead to them being accidentally mangled or deliberately changed as they spread. No one realizes that one of the most popular Cardien ballads about the recent wars between al-Wazif and Megalos uses the tune from the Beatles' "Yesterday," while only a few professionals know that the weird and decadent songs recently so popular with the Megalan aristocracy are the work of Cole Porter, freely translated into Anglish.

Dance

In the absence of television and cinema, dancing is one of the most popular forms of entertainment; every peasant village has a green and a band of amateur musicians who play there on holidays. Even in the Muslim lands, where close contact between the sexes in public is seen as immoral, both men and women dance in single-sex groups in private. There are also some female "harem dancers" trained to amuse men. Dancing even has a place in religious ritual among some Sufi groups (see p. 70), and in wilder forms among pagan cults.

Elven Arts

The native races of Yrth (aside from the orcs) had their own artistic traditions before the Banestorm, and these survived the coming of humanity largely intact. To humans, the elves in particular seem to be a race obsessed with aesthetics, with an artistic tradition so refined and elegant that it defines everything they do.

Elven art is never hurried, and always subtle. It sometimes involves magic, and indeed there are whole elven art forms built around illusion and sound spells. The elven reverence for the natural world makes their art seem cautious; furthermore, because elves are generally so creative by nature, they see art as something to *participate in*, not merely to admire – which, along with the anarchic nature of their society, means that there are few elven patrons of the arts, and few great elven plays or monumental sculptures designed to awe their audiences. The great elven works are *small* by human standards; ballads, poems, participatory dances, jewelry, and so on. Hence, humans usually find elven art curiously low-key – until they notice its pervasiveness and perfection.

However, *stage* dancing is generally much rarer. A kind of ballet, weirdly derived from Sufi Muslim forms, is known in Tredroy, and many "operas" (see *Musical Theater*, p. 35) incorporate some dance interludes, but dance is primarily seen as a participatory activity. No gentleman of Megalos, Cardiel, or even Caithness, is respected unless he knows the steps of the latest fashionable dance (although *what* that fashion may be varies from place to place – Caithnessers favor wild jigs and reels, Megalans dance stately pavanes and flamboyant but formalized mazurkas), while every village seems to have its own traditional folk dance . . . often suspected by religious puritans of involving some kind of immorality.

Literature

Literature includes both written and oral traditions. The literate class will often define themselves by their written artworks, while the illiterate are entertained by memorable ballads and epics and strolling players.

The literate classes are large enough, and have been active for long enough, to have built up a range of complex traditions and substantial libraries of great works. There are even full-scale novels in those libraries, although that taste is mostly limited to elements of the aristocracy. Certain secret government collections also hold fiction from *Earth*, tightly controlled because it contains too many references to high technology and prohibited political ideas; nonetheless, these books are secretly popular with some of the nobles, wizards, and churchmen who are permitted access.

Epic Verse

Epic verse is an ancient human tradition, widespread in 11th and 12th-century Europe. It is also popular, in different forms, with both elves and dwarves. It requires no particular technology – just poets with good memories – and can incorporate religious ideas, history, or flattery of a patron's deeds or family. Not surprisingly, it soon developed as a dynamic tradition on human-inhabited Yrth, and remains widely popular today. No self-respecting feudal lord feels that his hall is complete without a poet or two telling stirring tales of old in rhymed couplets. In the Nomad Lands, where the culture preserves strong Norse and Celtic influences, the epic is almost sacred.

Several of the greatest epics record the first days of humanity on Yrth, especially heroic battles with monsters or nonhumans, or the foundation of the human nations. The *Simoniad*, commissioned by Simon Menelaus himself, is the national myth of Megalos; naturally, it glorifies the ruling family. The original seven books encompassed only the first three generations of rulers, but sycophantic poets periodically offer continuations to the imperial house, and occasionally an emperor will announce that one such offering has been added to the canon, which now runs to 50-odd volumes and up to about the year 1850. The result is predictably a ponderous and uneven mess (with some flashes of skill), much more respected than read. By contrast, there are four different "national epics" in Caithness, two of which – George of Oakwood's *Lay of Conall* and Eoin the Boatman's *Nine Knights of Redhall* – are very fine indeed.

The greatest Ytarrian epic, however, is an oddity, created by Sister Elena, a Cardien nun of the 18th century about whom little else is known. *The Voyage of Jean and Catherine* is an intricate, elegiac tale of the founding of Araterre, incorporating romance, adventure, religious symbolism (which may be either transcendent or heretical, depending who one asks), and a sense of yearning for lost Earth. It is officially banned in Megalos for unspecified reasons, probably because it is thought hostile to Imperial policies.

Muslim Poets and Storytellers

The culture and traditions from which the Muslim lands of Yrth draw has a reverence for language that long predates Islam itself – indeed, Muslims point out the powerful Classical Arabic in which the Koran is composed as proof of its divine inspiration. In fact, the Koran has come to stand as the epitome of good Arabic, although writers must be careful not to seem to *imitate* it; that would be blasphemy.

Islamic literature has split into two streams, one a "high culture" of elegant poetry which despises the other "low culture" of popular storytelling – although there are inevitably areas of overlap. Poets are seen as intellectuals, and usually seek patronage from courts and rulers . . . although some of the most respected are eccentric dervishes, who pursue other sources of income altogether while incorporating subtle metaphysical symbolism into their "amateur" verses. Storytellers, on the other hand, are popular entertainers, who wander between urban coffeehouses

Dwarven Arts

Those who know the dwarves know that they are just as obsessively creative as the elves, and no less artistic for being more practical about it. Dwarven society is built around craftsmanship, and competition to create the finest work ensures that every serious implement that a dwarf makes is also a work of art. It may have intricate decorations, although most dwarves consider something *perfectly* fitted for its purpose to be beautiful enough. However, dwarves can appreciate fine jewelry for its own sake, although their styles tend to look ponderous to human eyes. Even dwarven literary culture is practical but well-crafted; dwarves compose ballads and epic sagas which describe and explain their history and social arrangements in clear, rigorous detail.

Their cousins the gnomes, who have a more elf-like love of nature, produce similar but subtler work, and quietly agree with humans that dwarven art can be rather boring.

Goblin Arts

The arrivals from Gabrook either brought very little in the way of art, or found themselves culturally overwhelmed by humanity. The goblins are certainly clever enough, but their love of innovation and novelty, and their willing integration into human culture, are such that most of their ancient works are long forgotten. A few curio-collectors have acquired faded miniature paintings and battered sculptures which came from Gabrook; these are well executed, but humans find them strange and disturbing. Goblins like short, clever poems – sonnets, haikus, limericks, and a form of their own called the *hraknoom*, based on alliterative triplets – preferably with a paradoxical or witty twist, and regard competitions of improvised versifying as high culture.

and travelers' camps, recounting popular stories in exchange for donations. They are often masters of improvised adaptation and the well-judged cliffhanger, refusing to finish a story until they've been paid enough; they may also interpolate the odd verse of fairly competent poetry into their tales.

There is also a minor but healthy tradition of prose essays and travel writing, popular in the Muslim upper classes, usually produced by gentleman amateurs seeking to demonstrate their wit. Some of these works are terrible; others incorporate great wisdom or practical knowledge.

Visual Arts

Painting and sculpture on Ytarria mostly take the form of sophisticated representational work – or elegant abstract decoration in the Muslim lands. There is a minor tradition of representational miniature painting in al-Haz, based on Persian styles from Earth, but this is regarded as morally dubious by influential mullahs. Aesthetics basically focus on detailed realism; impressionistic or non-decorative abstract art has never developed. Techniques and styles in the Christian lands somewhat resemble Italian Renaissance art on Earth – technically highly accomplished and sophisticated – and artists are expected to serve lengthy apprenticeships and study a range of skills and theories.

The most sophisticated culture is found in Cardiel and Tredroy; talented journeyman artists from other lands dream of traveling to the south to find fame and, more importantly, artistic freedom. Cardien lords compete to display the most sophisticated tastes, and often keep artists in their households; this competitive atmosphere leads to a fair amount of diversity and experimentation. Typical themes for Cardien art are either religious – paintings of scenes from the Bible or the lives of the saints, and statues of religious figures – or depictions of members of patron families, possibly doing something heroic but mostly simply looking noble and impressive. There is a continuing tension between the last requirement and the artistic ideal of realism. A few great artists are remembered for their dangerous ability to paint seemingly flattering portraits which actually contain subtle comments on the subject's true nature.

By contrast, Megalan art is dull and ponderous. The Megalan nobility have some vague idea about Earth-Classical forms and ideals but usually reduce these to the universal drudge that art should consist of impressive images of heroes, with the patron's name clearly attached. They love sculpture, but most of their statues look like dull-witted musclemen; there is no sense of action. Most paintings are either lurid portraits with vague battle scenes in the background, or simple miniatures.

"Cultural Contamination"

GMs seeking to describe artistic creations or performances on Yrth should *not* be afraid to include references to material from Earth. A fair amount slips through in the memories or pockets of Banestorm victims, who sometimes find that it provides them with a source of income; Yrth governments may control access to "alien" technology, but they have few worries about songs or stories, while audiences often find artistic novelty amusing.

Among the works which have appeared on Yrth are translations of the plays of William Shakespeare, although these haven't always been popular. In fact, when they were rediscovered recently in Tredroy, their origin became a matter of dispute; even those experts who believed that they came from Earth rather than being a local product disagreed widely about their *date*, and some people continue to insist that they are merely two or three centuries old, and are derivative efforts using stock plots. However, they're now quite popular, and most citizens of Tredroy or Cardiel will recognize references or quotations.

The nobility of Caithness are less pretentious, but seem to take a perverse pride in their lack of sophistication; they just want colorful murals and tapestries for their castles. Occasionally, one will import a Cardien artist, at great expense, to produce something "classier." However, there *is* a minor Caithnesser tradition of subtle but very skillful "domestic" art (depicting interiors and ordinary people), mostly found in Carrick; the artists involved struggle to make a living from sales to the merchant class.

Painting and sculpture in the Nomad Lands are almost entirely limited to local religious themes, and are ignored by the rest of Yrth. Sahudese painting mostly seems to consist of misty landscapes and stylized portraits, executed in pen and ink; this is the one place where the idea that "less is more" means *anything* to local artists.

Architecture

Buildings on Yrth are immensely varied. Many focus on form over function, but the greatest cities boast some dramatically decorative buildings. Great cathedrals and mosques are usually the most likely to be designed as true works of art. The Christian church acquired the Gothic aesthetic through the Banestorm, and adopted it with enthusiasm; many Ytarrian cathedrals have towering spires, flying buttresses, and lots of stained glass.

Conversely, because nobles still have to worry about the possibility of warfare, or at least prefer to look like warriors, and because military technology is still essentially TL3, the typical great provincial household still lives in a cold, drafty, crenelated castle on the "high medieval" pattern, rather than in a mansion. After many centuries of development, however, some of these castles are impressively big and cunningly designed. The threat of magic often leads to additional features such as extensive slate roofs to protect against flying foes and fire, and the incorporation of magical protections into the structure.

Probably the greatest building on Yrth, in terms of quantity if not quality, is the Imperial Palace of Megalos (p. 92). In 1630, the emperor of the time grew tired of living in a cold keep. The replacement he commissioned has grown over the centuries since, as successive emperors have added wings, annexes, and outbuildings. Today, it's a veritable maze of shadowy throne-rooms, marbled ballrooms, echoing galleries, looming towers – and, behind the scenes, a warren of servants' quarters and passageways. The construction includes ridiculously massive blocks, feathery gothic stonework, and some flimsy half-timbered sections. It's militarily indefensible, of course, but no one seriously expects the capital of the Empire to come under attack.

Social Arrangements

Feudalism and Muslim social ideals provide most Ytarrian human societies with their basic structure, but do not dictate how life is lived. Furthermore, local conditions sometimes require small or large adjustments.

The Peasantry

The lowest rank on the feudal hierarchy is occupied by the *serf*. This is not just a peasant farmer; serfs are legally tied to the land. From birth, the serf owes allegiance to his lord, must work the land for a proportion of the time, must ask the lord's permission (and perhaps pay a fee) before getting married or making almost any major life change, and *certainly* cannot leave home without a good reason.

A serf is not a slave. The lord cannot buy or sell a serf, nor can he buy or sell the land the serf works without permission from his own liege (usually the monarch). A serf has rights under law, though he may have difficulty claiming them. Feudal obligations are always mutual; a serf trades service for protection.

Villeins are peasants who are legally free agents, albeit owing fealty to a lord. They pay rent on land with their labor. The distinction may seem small, as duties and oaths can prevent a villein wandering off, and the villein's freedom is often the freedom to serve or starve, but freedom it nonetheless is. Ultimately, villeins *can* find ways to leave their land, and some do. Odd as it seems, lords want to have both villeins and serfs on their estates, because villeins make better soldiers. Even contented serfs make unhappy fighters, as they are risking their lives with no prospect of improvement. A villein can receive good pay, and dream of plunder or glory.

A few villeins, known as *cottars*, actually own cottages and land (within the limits of feudal law). They still owe allegiance to their lords, and would find it hard to sell their property if they wanted to, but they inevitably take pride in their superiority over their neighbors.

About 35% of the peasants in mainland Megalos are villeins. Arrogant Megalan lords might wish that the proportion was even lower, but the class is important to the Empire. Ambitious sons of villeins

A serf is not a slave. The lord cannot buy or sell a serf, nor can he buy or sell the land the serf works without permission from his own liege.

provide the best recruits to the legions, and hence are the backbone of the Megalan military. Further, ambitious villeins give the Empire much of its occasional dynamism.

By contrast, in Caithness and Cardiel, at least 70 to 80% of peasants are villeins. Cardiel was settled by proud Muslims, and both were later colonized by volunteers from Megalos. Their nobles have rarely been able to enserf their tenants. The proportion of free peasants in Araterre is even higher, thanks to the archipelago's patchwork of small landholdings and isolated settlements (though there are a few "plantation estates" with *heavily* oppressed serfs).

There are no serfs as such in the Islamic lands. There are plenty of *slaves*, and many oppressed peasants, but the idea of a person being tied to a piece of land is alien. Most Muslim peasants rent their land from a lord or great estate; a few own property outright. All, however, know that the Caliph or Sultan is the supreme authority in their world.

PCs from a serf background will need a good story to explain why they aren't still working the fields, and how they picked up "adventuring" skills. They may have their former lord as an Enemy. Younger sons of the villein class, on the other hand, quite often go off on adventures.

Peasant Life

The life of rural peasants is hard, but not impossible. They live to till the soil, raise livestock, have children, and feed their families. Men work the fields, make their own tools, repair their cottages, and labor for their lord. Women make clothes, tend children, milk cows, and cook meals. In planting and harvest seasons, they may labor from dawn to dusk every day save Sundays and religious feast days; at quieter times, they have more scope for relaxation. A poor serf's cottage has one room, containing a table, fireplace, and one bed which the entire family shares; greater wealth is indicated by anything from two beds up to multiple rooms. In cold winters, livestock may be allowed inside, so that everyone can stay warm.

Some very mundane spells available to unremarkable hedge-magicians can make peasant life much more comfortable and secure than it was in the real Middle Ages, primarily by improving crop yields, ensuring clean water supplies, and helping to put up stout stone buildings. Many Ytarrian farms produce substantial food surpluses, allowing nearby cities to grow rather larger than was normal at TL3 on Earth. Low-mana Caithness, however, remains less urbanized and slightly more "traditional medieval." For more on the social consequences of widespread magic, see ***GURPS Fantasy.***

For recreation, peasants attend religious festivals, dances, and wrestling matches on the village green. Weddings, births, and finishing the planting or harvesting are all cause for celebration, when peasants gather to drink, sing, and play games.

Peasants sometimes seem a bit dim-witted, but they are usually just undereducated. They are just as smart as the nobility, and many have great practical cunning. Among other things, they often have a keen awareness of their legal rights, and are clever about claiming them. They may vocally dismiss "book learning" as a waste of time, but this is a pose; canny peasants know what books are for, and make sure they have a literate priest or wise man to consult when necessary. Players considering peasant characters may get some useful ideas from *Adventurers from Other Occupations* (p. 206) and the *Peasant Hero* template (p. 214).

Nonhumans in Human Society

Humanity has had centuries to become accustomed to the nonhuman races on Yrth, and most people are tolerant of such beings, or at least see no point in persecuting them. Many have come to like and admire their nonhuman neighbors. However, attitudes vary considerably from place to place and individual to individual, and the nonhuman races have their own ideas about humanity and each other.

Where nonhumans settle within human countries, they tend to form their own villages or clannish communities within cities. (Sometimes this is for practical reasons – halflings need smaller buildings than humans.) Nonhumans who live entirely among humans are usually seen as oddities. After all, even without prejudice on either side, most nonhumans can only have families with their own kind. Elves are a partial exception to this, as they can form relationships with humans, and even produce children, but their long lives and differing viewpoints make for other problems.

Goblins and halflings are the races best established within human society. Halflings are usually villagers and villeins, owing feudal loyalty to a local lord; they then mostly look after their own concerns. They give the impression of seeing fealty as a technicality, but wise lords know that halflings are good farmers and trustworthy taxpayers, and often waive demands for military service in exchange for extra taxes. Goblins form larger social units – there are goblin aristocrats and goblin cities, especially in Megalos – and are often members of the urban merchant class. They are even better taxpayers than halflings, because they like to get seriously rich . . . although they are also more inclined to duck their obligations.

Dwarves and gnomes don't always trust humans, but when someone goes to the trouble of building a good relationship with them, they make excellent trading partners. Some small dwarf communities have established feudal relationships with nearby humans; their leaders are happy enough to take the title of "knight," although relationships within such communities tend to be more equal than in a human knightly fief.

The Merchant Class

Christian feudal social theory divides society into Those Who Labor (peasants), Those Who Fight (knights and nobles), and Those Who Pray (priests). It thus has a problem with merchants, who don't fit into these categories; some churchmen denounce them as parasites and profiteers. However, sensible people realize that trade is *necessary* (leading some philosophers into tortuous attempts to define a "just price"). Muslims remember that the Prophet was once a merchant, and have fewer problems.

To really stiff-necked nobles, merchants are just another sort of laborer, whose work involves carting things around rather than digging – jumped-up peasants. The problem is that some merchants are much richer than many nobles. Further, over the centuries, many merchants have found their way into positions of power, especially in Megalos, with its titles-by-purchase. Merchants' children often buy good educations, enter the church, and work their way up from there. Hence, in practice, only the most pompous of aristocrats are openly disdainful of merchants, and some broad-minded noble younger sons actually go into trade.

The "merchant class" is very broad, ranging from wandering peddlers to fabulously wealthy businessmen with fleets of ships and hundreds of employees. All but the poorest are usually free citizens of a chartered town and members of a merchant guild (see p. 50), and demand the respect due to that position.

Knighthood

Knights, and their Muslim counterparts the ghazis and 'amirs, are a warrior class. That is not to say that every knight goes about in armor with a lance; some are old, fat, cowardly, or busy doing something else. However, knights who are not warriors have left a gap in their lands' armed forces, which must be filled.

Knights fight on horseback; fighting *purely* on foot is for peasants, although a well-trained knight is adaptable. Hence, knights need either land of their own or a wealthy patron, to finance their expensive weapons, armor, warhorse, a squire or two, and a few supporting troops. (In Araterre, knights sometimes own a share in a combat-worthy ship instead of a horse.) The "poor knight," with scraps of armor, inferior weapons, and a broken-down mount, is a popular joke figure. A wandering knight may be between patrons, or some distance from a tolerant patron, but this cannot be maintained for long.

This means that many landed knights act as landowners first, and warriors occasionally. Some, with poor estates, have trouble maintaining the accoutrements of knighthood, risking looking like mere peasants with pretensions. Landless knights may be proud warriors, or they too may slip, becoming mercenaries. Many "knights-errant" dream of war, when their services are needed and they can win glory and plunder.

Though a valiant warrior may be knighted on the battlefield, most knights are the product of arduous training. Children as young as seven can become pages, servants to a lord or knight. At 14, they may be squired, "apprenticed" to a knight. Generally, only boys of high birth (Status 2+) are candidates; a few knights, however, will accept a likely young commoner, and in Caithness girls are eligible. Successful squires are eventually knighted, in a ceremony reminding them of their duties. This may involve fasting, bathing, long vigils before an altar, and confession, to purify mind and body. In most lands, only lords may actually make knights, though they can delegate the ceremonial role to other knights; in Caithness, the rules are slightly more relaxed.

Chivalry and Futuwwa

Chivalry is the code of honor for Christian knights. More than simply rules of behavior, it defines the *mystique* of knighthood. The word has the same linguistic roots as "cavalry"; it is the code of the horseman.

The duties of *good* knights are to serve their lords; to defend the faith; to protect the poor and helpless; to keep the peace and enforce their lords' laws. They should be courtiers as well as warriors, skilled in gentle arts – dancing, reciting poetry, singing, playing music, and chess. (They need not necessarily be literate, and some aren't.) They should treat other knights as brothers, regardless of country, extending courtesy even in battle. If two knights fight and one drops his sword, the other would show great chivalry by returning it. (A foot-soldier is unlikely to receive the same courtesy!) Knights should be hospitable to guests (even their sworn enemies), and their word is inviolable.

A knight is expected to be gentle to all women. He may sing a lady's praises and fight for her honor, and never hope for more than a silken glove to carry as a favor. Female knights are unknown except in Caithness, and rare even there. (Caithness society is divided on whether women knights should be gentle to men, women, both, or neither.)

Muslim Social Positions

In ***GURPS***, titles in Ytarrian Muslim societies are mostly treated as Administrative or Military Ranks. However, they are linked to Status; high Rank grants free Status (see p. B29), and characters cannot have a Rank more than two levels higher than their total Status. Indeed, Rank more than one level above Status will mark the holder as an upstart.

A member of the Ghazi Orders (p. 70) has Status 2, but *not* usually Military Rank, as Ghazis are expected to fight together as equals, submit to the lawful commands of civil and religious authorities (especially in war), and follow their consciences when adventuring alone. Comfortably-off merchants and lesser sheikhs are Status 1, the lowliest peasants are Status -1, and slaves are Status -2. See the Status section in Chapter 5 for more information.

Not every knight comes close to this ideal, which is represented by Code of Honor (Chivalry) in ***GURPS*** terms. See Chapter 5 for more Code of Honor types specific to Yrth. Many try, but slip occasionally, or permit themselves some exceptions. More accept the privileges of their rank without worrying about its duties, or are chivalrous enough to their own class, but treat foreigners and peasants with contempt. Some are thugs. Most are ordinary human beings with basic ethics and ordinary flaws. A rough-and-ready knight may have Code of Honor (Pirate's), considering that to be chivalry enough; some hardened warriors have Code of Honor (Soldier's), being honorable in battle but ignoring civilian niceties; some have Vows to follow specific rules. "Attempts to follow chivalrous rules" is a valid quirk.

Arms and Devices

In an illiterate society, pictures are important. A shoemaker's shop is indicated by a picture of a shoe; a wizard's by a black cat or a crystal ball; a pawnbroker's by three gold globes.

Likewise, individuals are represented by personal symbols. These are called *arms* if the bearer is noble, and are subject to the rules of heraldry, which enable a full set of arms to say a lot about the bearer's ancestry and status. Heraldry skill enables characters to identify people they have never met this way. A mistake can lead to confusion, and sometimes to accusations of treachery in battle. Deliberately displaying false arms is illegal, and usually a sign of sinister intentions.

The rules on Yrth are similar to our world's, but with significant divergences. In brief, there are three metals (silver/white, gold/yellow, and copper/orange) and five colors (red, blue, green, black, and violet); designs must not place a metal next to a metal, or a color next to a color. Designs sometimes combine arms from the bearer's ancestry in some way, and related nobles usually have similar arms.

A *coat of arms* is actually a tabard, worn over armor and emblazoned with a symbol. A knight usually has his arms painted on his shield. A noblewoman may bear arms; if she is not a warrior herself, they will be displayed on an oval shape. Men-at-arms wear their lord's colors, or livery, and often paint his arms on their own shields. ("Livery and maintenance" is the legal right to maintain a force who wears your livery – in other words, the right to have a uniformed private army.) A blank-shield soldier is a mercenary; knights seeking anonymity cover their shields, perhaps exposing them at the last minute before a joust or battle, or sometimes carry the arms of an obscure secondary holding rather than their best-known symbol.

Commoners can't bear arms, but anyone can adopt a personal symbol. This should be simple to draw. For instance, Justina Wolfslayer, an illiterate warrior, has an arrow symbol. She "signs" documents with it, and marks her property similarly. She must be careful not to use it as a coat of arms, though, or she'll be in trouble with the law. Were she to be ennobled, she would have the heralds design her arms incorporating an arrow and, probably, a wolf.

Chivalry permits asking a ransom for a captured enemy, who should be treated courteously while this is arranged. (Letting a prisoner go for a sworn promise of payment is chivalrous to the point of stupidity.) A typical ransom is half a year's cost of living for the prisoner; greedy captors ask for more. Hence, mercy, at least to the rich, makes economic sense.

The arms and armor of a defeated knight belong to the victor in battle *or* a tournament; this is not a ransom, but "spoils of war." (It is chivalrous for experienced knights, having trounced young challengers, to return their arms.) This makes tournament fighting a potentially profitable but risky gamble.

The nearest Muslim term to "chivalry" is "futuwwa," although this is a broader term, more like "manliness" or "honor" – sometimes simply the macho "honor" of the street tough. However, many ghazis are as idealistic as any Christian knight, while the idea that they have their own futuwwa can inspire common Muslim soldiers to great deeds.

The Nobility

The elite of feudal society live in fine manors, keeps, or castles. Servants wait upon them, troubadours and jesters entertain them, and they dress in fine silks and furs. When they aren't at court, visiting neighboring nobles, or attending tourneys, they entertain guests of their own, hunt, or arrange spectacles.

However, nobles have their obligations. First, they are responsible for the defense of their land. Nobles live on what their estates produce; even if they remain safe in their castles, they will be reduced to poverty if their fiefdom is harmed. Further, they may be called upon by their lord to fight and provide troops at any time. Most young male nobles receive knightly training (usually in a neighbor or ally's household), and many are very proud of their knighthoods.

They must also manage their estates. They hear requests and complaints from the peasants, settle legal disputes, and supervise the operation of mills, the training of men-at-arms, the collection of taxes and rents, and the working of the fields. Nobles have servants – bailiffs and seneschals – to handle many of these duties, and their families often serve as deputies while they are absent, but responsibility ultimately rests with the noble.

Orders of Knighthood

Most knights owe allegiance to a feudal lord, or sometimes directly to a king, but there are exceptions. An "order of knighthood" gives allegiance to some cause or ideal. Some are just ceremonial clubs, with a king or prince as leader and patron; others are full-scale religious orders, with monk-like vows, taking up arms in God's service.

Most orders have a distinct character, deriving from their ideals, traditions, or leadership. Members' coats of arms are usually modified to indicate their association, and the knights are typically proud to identify themselves as members of the order. A few orders are seen as subversive, but most are serious in their allegiance to the system and their superiors. Membership is generally for life; expulsion is a major mark of shame.

The significant religious orders in Ytarria are the Templars (p. 63) and the Hospitallers (p. 62). Both are tools of conquest for Megalos, although they have their own priorities, and have given many emperors cause for concern. The greatest secular order is Caithness' Knights of the Stone (p. 115), who see themselves as romantic heroes. Caithness also has its own religious group, the Order of St. George of the Dragon (p. 119), which does much good locally, while providing a home for devout Caithness knights who might otherwise be attracted by the Megalan religious orders. There are no powerful orders in Cardiel, although there are several small groups and chapter-houses. For the Muslim counterparts, see *The Ghazi Orders* (p. 70).

Slavery

Slavery existed on the fringes of medieval European society, and was an integral part of Islam at that time, as well as being normal in many other human societies throughout history. Hence, it inevitably appeared on Yrth.

In some circumstances, it solves serious problems. First, wars produce a lot of prisoners, and medieval societies lack the resources to imprison such people for long periods. Enslaving them may seem more moral than simply massacring them! In addition, many communities have a pressing need for additional labor, and it's tempting to meet it by exploiting neighbors who are seen as less than human. After centuries of wars, the countries of Ytarria have a tradition of trading prisoners after each conflict, but this doesn't always happen (it tends to cost both governments money). There thus remains an incentive to enslave prisoners. In all lands, slavery is for life, though outside Megalos slaves may be freed by their owners, and Islam encourages this.

Today, Megalos, al-Haz, and al-Wazif permit slavery, as do many tribes in the Nomad Lands and elsewhere. (Other tribes call slave-owners weaklings who can't work for themselves.) Megalos, modeled consciously on Imperial Rome, adopted it with a lot of other Roman traditions. Caithness officially follows Megalan law, although slaves are rare there; some prisoners and law-breakers work for the King, while others are forced to settle in frontier regions as serfs. Sahud doesn't have slavery, formally speaking, but some of its rigid social institutions come close. Cardiel

technically abandoned slavery as part of a complicated set of social reforms, mostly as a symbolic break with other societies, but it survives in out-of-the-way regions. Araterre never really adopted the Megalan model, but nonhumans and Bilit Islanders are used as slaves on some estates.

Among nonhumans, some clans of dwarves use slavery as a convenience and a form of punishment, while others don't keep slaves at all. Goblins follow local human customs, and elves consider the whole idea of slavery to be repulsive. Orcs and ogres, of course, will exploit anyone weaker than themselves. The other known races show little interest in keeping slaves, or don't have enough of a social organization for it to be an issue.

Human slaveholders generally consider nonhuman slaves to be dangerous and unpredictable. Most (with the exception of an occasional halfling or goblin criminal) are slaves by capture."Savage races" such as orcs are thought hard to control, while if members of other races (*especially* elves) hear that one of their kind is enslaved, they often free him and take violent revenge for the indignity.

Slaves have no rights to property or personal possessions, although most owners permit a slave a few personal items. Slaves in Megalos (and, theoretically, Caithness) can be casually slain by their owners, for any or no reason. But while this is *legal*, it is not considered *right*; the Knights of the Stone, in particular, have been known to aggressively chastise abusive slave-owners. Likewise, while Islamic law permits slaves to be killed, anyone doing so is regarded with disgust by most Muslims. Injuring someone else's slave is a serious offense against property.

Marriage among Megalan slaves is not recognized by law. In Muslim lands and Caithness, slaves may marry with their owner's permission, or at his command. An owner who marries his own female slave will usually free her.

For general rules on such things, including costs, see p. B518. Prices of slaves vary substantially; those for unskilled slaves fall during and immediately after wars, when there are plenty of prisoners.

Types of Imperial Slaves

Under Megalan law, there are four types of slaves, and the same categories can apply in other lands. In a typical slave-market, most are slaves by capture or birth. Slaves by law are owned by the Crown and not usually sold.

Slaves by Law

Lawbreakers convicted of murder, treason, or ruinous destruction of another's property may become slaves of the Crown. Half their market value is awarded to the injured party (or his family), and the slave is used to build, clean, mine, and perform other onerous tasks away from polite society. The lifespan of such slaves is short; five years on average, 10 at best. Therefore, reduce their loyalty modifier by 2 (or more) when rolling reactions. Only rarely is a slave of the Crown freed, and never without special cause.

Zarak has the same idea, mostly used as a way of dealing with non-dwarf intruders. Islamic law rejects this concept; Muslims cannot be enslaved, even if they are criminals.

Slaves by Capture

These are mostly people taken in war (and not returned by treaty afterwards). They also include the victims of professional slave-raiders, who attack remote communities in other lands – a risky but profitable trade. Both Christians and Muslims are prohibited from enslaving members of their own religions, although vicious traders periodically ignore this. Coastal villages in al-Wazif, Cardiel, and Araterre all live in dread of raids, as do those who dwell close to the borders. Conscientious local rulers regard raids on their territory as personal insults, and hunt down the raiders with grim determination, while local peacetime treaties often restrict the trade. Thus, slave-traders often have to go far afield, seeking out "pagans" and "savages" in distant lands. This also produces a fair number of nonhuman slaves.

Slaves by Choice

A Megalan who desperately needs money may sell himself into slavery. This could occur if a loved one commits a crime and is fined beyond his ability to pay (which would lead to more serious punishments), or if a parent can no longer support all his children. Slaves-to-be receive their net market worth (generally the amount they could earn in five years using their best skills). Roll loyalty reaction checks for these people at +2.

Caithness recognizes this concept, but regards it with some distaste. It is unknown elsewhere.

Slaves by Birth

The child of a female slave is the property of the slave's owner, except that, in Muslim lands, if the slave's owner is the (acknowledged) father, the child is free, and must be treated as an heir. A large number of slaves in Megalos, and many in Muslim lands, are slaves by birth. In larger Megalan cities, slave houses even breed slaves to specification; the most successful have operated for centuries.

Hereditary slavery no longer exists in Caithness; the child of a slave becomes the feudal liegeman of the owner, and usually settles in some rural area in need of development. Dwarves and many tribal peoples allow slavery by birth, though they often have a custom of freeing slave-children, or bringing them up as trusted members of the household.

Economics

A feudal economy is *not* based on cash. A peasant can usually live off the produce of his land, and a knight or lord dines on tribute paid in kind by his tenants. However, people do sometimes need coinage, and Ytarria has more of a cash economy than medieval Europe.

Most Ytarrian countries produce coins, stamped with intricate designs to make forgery harder. There are still fakes, despite the fact that governments punish the crime severely. Every century or two, well-run countries recall and re-mint their coinage to restore its credibility. Some rulers debase (lower the quality of) their own coins, and pocket the difference, but everyone knows that this leads to trouble, and rich merchants and money-changers sometimes employ wizards or alchemists to test coins for quality. In addition, coins in Muslim countries are usually marked with Koranic quotations, and anyone who debases them can be accused of sacrilege.

Use the costs for goods in the ***Basic Set***, Chapter 8. A ***GURPS*** $ represents either a copper coin or a very small silver coin. The most common silver coins are worth $4. Gold coins are rare (a peasant may never see one in his life), and usually used only for large exchanges and as a store of wealth, but are occasionally spent by the flamboyantly wealthy.

Regardless, coins *are* rare; much trade, even in moderately large towns, involves barter. Many merchants (p. 40) must be prepared to accept payment in kind. In most places, travelers can easily trade labor for food (about four hours of manual labor per meal).

Trade Routes

Trade is well-established around Ytarria. Waterways and seacoasts provide the best routes; where there are no convenient waterways, there are roads and caravan tracks. Large loads are almost always moved by water, which is faster and cheaper than outfitting an overland caravan. The lure of profit can override other priorities for many people; even arch-enemies do business when they're not at war, and the hardiest explorers are also merchants.

Coins of Ytarria

Megalos has the copper farthing ($1), the silver penny ($4), and the gold mark ($200). The Megalan pound ($1,000) is sometimes just an accounting term, sometimes an actual pound bar of silver. Araterre uses Megalan coins, and Caithness mints its own coins with the same names and values.

Al-Haz and al-Wazif have the copper halala ($1), the silver dirham ($4), and the gold dinar ($100). A talent ($1,000) is, like the pound, an accounting term, or (rarely) a thick gold coin. These coins are also very common in Cardiel. Cardien mints are decentralized, and its coins are more likely to be debased. Thus, Cardiens prefer foreign currency.

Zarakun coins are *very* pure, reliable, and often physically large. They include the small copper khenn ($1), the copper dann ($12), the silver ffo ($144), and the gold tohn ($5,184). However, dwarf coins are extremely rare outside Zarak; a dwarf who pays a non-dwarf in danns, let alone ffo, is showing great respect.

Sahud has a wide range of coins, with the most common being the silver yen ($10). Sahudese aristocrats occasionally use privately-printed *paper* money; the rest of the world finds this bewildering.

There are innumerable other coins in Ytarria, trustworthy and not, usually made as fractions or multiples of the ones listed above. GMs can consult a history text for inspiration, or simply invent their own.

Crime and Punishment

While legal and penal systems vary from place to place in Ytarria (see Chapter 3), they are always somewhat *medieval*. Imprisonment is a matter of holding criminals before trial or punishment; imprisoning them for longer is feeding them at the state's expense – and, in any case, most prisons are sordid enough that it would amount to a death sentence often enough. However, some dungeons do hold prisoners who have been there a while, when a lord can neither kill that person nor let them go yet; hostages, individuals worth a ransom, and political enemies who might yet be useful, are all possibilities – as are prisoners awaiting a good torturer or mind-reader.

Mostly, though, penalties tend to be on an "eye-for-an-eye" basis, and fines are very common, especially as a way to make restitution to the victim. Executions, maiming, and floggings usually take place in public. Flogging, a popular penalty for minor crimes of assault or theft, usually consists of a dozen lashes, doing 1d-3 total damage (minimum 0). In some areas, crimes receive greater or lesser sentences. Of course, flogging is designed to be painful; prisoners might have to make Fright Checks if faced with severe punishments, and High or Low Pain Threshold should also modify their reactions to the experience.

Many crimes are punished by branding on the face or hand, or minor mutilations. This is as much a way of marking a professional criminal as a painful punishment. A thief cannot move to another town and

pretend to be respectable if he is literally a marked man. This in turn leads to courts issuing "certificates of honesty" to people who have been maimed in accidents (and hence to a black market in *fake* certificates). A PC with a physical disadvantage may also have an unearned negative Reputation as a possible criminal.

However, law enforcement is more sophisticated than it might seem. A combination of scrupulous Michaelite investigations (see p. 64), information spells, and ideas about forensic techniques and legal evidence brought through the Banestorm, can make for surprisingly fair trials. A wizard's evidence about the results of a spell are usually accepted in court, provided the wizard has a good reputation. It is sometimes possible to suborn such wizards, but many regard bribes as beneath their dignity, or simply value their commercial reputation too highly. In major trials, several wizards may be hired by different parties, to provide a consensus testimony.

Treason, and willful murder with no mitigating circumstances, are almost always capital crimes. Treasonous nobles *also* suffer loss of their titles and estates, leaving their families devastated. Slaying in a duel is not usually murder, though local rulers may prohibit duels (if only as a waste of good warriors), and any sort of cheating in a duel is treated as attempted murder. Other crimes attract variable penalties. In many areas, where the local culture is basically sexist, crimes against women incur lower penalties; rape may even be seen as almost as much a crime against *property* as an assault. However, this is far less universal on modern Yrth than in medieval times, particularly in Caithness and Cardiel. For attitudes toward homosexuality, see *Sexual Morality*, p. 34.

Feudal Law Enforcement

Landed knights and nobles (pp. 40, 41) are responsible for enforcing the law on their own estates, subject to various local rules, special cases, and rights of appeal. While they are not full-time policemen, this does give them certain legal rights. A Status 3+ landowner might often claim (and, in game terms, have to pay the points for) 5-point Legal Enforcement Powers; he can arrest people, levy fines for civil offenses, etc.

A feudal king, emperor, or Muslim ruler ultimately embodies the law in his own land. While most do not dirty their hands with routine law enforcement most of the time, they are entitled to do so, have national jurisdiction, and can act as judge and jury as well as investigator even in capital cases, giving them 15-point Legal Enforcement Powers.

Political Systems

Government and administration on Yrth might appear simplistic at first glance to someone from Earth – but a look below the surface shows something subtler. Although these systems derive from medieval structures and are limited by factors like low-speed communications, many Yrth governments are quite successful.

Feudalism

The first humans from Europe to arrive on Yrth brought feudalism with them. As they built a new society, organizing power relations this way proved quite serviceable, just as it had during the chaos of the Dark Ages.

Since then, Ytarrian feudalism has evolved. The description which follows is largely theoretical. Still, Ytarrians understand this model, and Caithness and Cardiel follow its general strictures. The Megalan Empire (p. 85) borrows from feudalism but is essentially autocratic.

Feudalism is *stratified*. Everyone has a discrete place in the hierarchy, but all are bound together by a web of mutual obligations and duties. Anyone of high status has certain duties to those below him as well as duties to those above – even serfs have *some* rights. The social order is reinforced by religious belief; those at the top of the ladder thank God for their power, while religious leaders advise those on the bottom to be content with their lot.

In feudal society, all power – political, military and economic – is derived from the control of land and the people who work it. Without land, a baron is no more than a bandit leader, his armored knights mere thugs. Furthermore, land without peasants to work on it is almost as bad as no land at all. Rules and customs governing the ownership and use of land are the very heart of the system.

Technically speaking, private ownership of land doesn't exist. All land is held *in fief*, by grant from a higher authority. High nobles hold land by grant from the monarch, and may in turn grant some portion of it to lesser nobles. With the grant of land comes control over those persons who live on it; nobles are rulers over their fiefdoms, subject only to the king's right to tax or call up troops. The kingdom itself is a fiefdom, held by divine right. All land belongs ultimately to God, and the monarch is His vassal.

Fealty, Homage and Land Ownership

In exchange for his fief, a noble must swear fealty to the monarch, and a landed knight must swear fealty to a lord. The vassal or liege man swears to do the bidding of his lord and to support him militarily. In return, the lord grants the vassal land, a title, or both, and swears to protect him and maintain him in his honors and station. Fealty may be sworn to an office – that is, to the Crown or the Church – or to an individual. Powerful nobles in Christian lands generally swear their fealty to the Crown; thus, if the king dies, they are already in the service of his successor.

A knight or lord may only consider himself released from his oath of fealty if the liege lord commits some serious wrong, such as treason or heresy. When a noble swears fealty, he is usually given a token – often a glove or gauntlet – to symbolize his pledge of service. If he wishes to renounce his vow, he will throw the gauntlet at his lord's feet – hence the tradition of throwing down one's glove when challenging another to a duel.

Homage is like fealty, but it is more serious and binding; it is a vow to follow a liege lord, regardless of circumstances or wrongdoing! Thus, if a liege lord is disgraced, so are all those who pay him homage, and if he goes to battle, they must go with him, even to certain death. Unless they are forced to, nobles rarely swear homage – it is generally reserved for personal guards.

Titles and Fiefdoms

A noble title almost always has a fiefdom attached to it. (See the cost-of-living table on p. 187 to see how status affects the amount of property one controls.) Many fiefdoms, however, are not accompanied by titles, being held by untitled knights (and many knights have no fiefdoms at all). The lowest-ranking title is *Baron* (Status 4), the holder of a single significant fief. A *Viscount* ranks higher in precedence, and may hold a couple of fiefs, but is considered to be on the same level (and hence is also Status 4).

An *Earl* or *Count* (Status 5 – the title used depends on regional custom) can hold multiple fiefs, almost always direct from the crown, and may have minor barons owing him fealty, but is restricted by law, or at least custom, from holding land outside of a single "county." A *Marquess* has similar rights, but the title is usually first given to someone holding land in vulnerable border areas (known as "marches") or unstable regions. Hence, the limits on landholding area are relaxed (Status 5, but with precedence over a count and often more power). Of course, many a marquess' territory has not been on any sort of frontier for generations.

Higher yet is *Duke*, which places the holder on a level with most princes (Status 6); some dukes are practically independent monarchs in their own territories, and many certainly act as if they were. Sensible monarchs try to avoid creating too many dukedoms, and let such titles lapse whenever possible, even if the last holder behaved himself.

Inheritance of Titles

Noble titles are hereditary; the oldest son inherits the title and any fiefdoms and obligations attached to it on his father's death. This must theoretically be confirmed by the King, but approval is almost always automatic – anything else makes the nobility very restive. In the event that a noble dies without any sons, his title and lands revert to the monarch, who may then grant them as he chooses. In most places, a daughter can't inherit a title, but her husband is a likely candidate to receive it from the king. Many powerful nobles got their start by hastily marrying a recently widowed or orphaned noblewoman.

In Caithness, a title doesn't revert if there is a daughter to inherit it. Furthermore, Caithness allows a father to disinherit a son he considers unworthy, in favor of a younger son or even a daughter. This has led to bloodshed and wars, but also to better leaders on average.

A younger son has a number of choices. He may become a priest, monk, or wizard. He may enter the military as an officer in the king's personal guard or army. He might be granted a title – either a created one or a newly-vacant position – one or two ranks lower than his father's, if that can be engineered (most noble houses have a few spare minor titles, with no associated land, for courtesy use). Or he could get himself killed in political infighting. Once upon a time, pioneering new lands was also an option, but now only Caithness has significant amounts of wilderness frontier, and the civil war there makes pursuing even those marginal territories hard.

Knighthood (p. 40) is not officially hereditary, and neither are fiefdoms which lack accompanying titles. However, the sons of a knight, if they are fit, will be fostered out as pages and then as squires, and given every chance to win their spurs. If a landed knight has a capable son, his lord will likely permit the son to succeed to his father's fiefdom. "Knight errantry", as pursued by many younger sons of nobles and knights, is the polite term for adventuring in pursuit of titles, pay, tournament prizes, or romantic ideals (with some womanizing and carousing along the way). "Knights-errant" range from pretentious bandits, through professional mercenaries, to starry-eyed dreamers.

Megalan Autocracy

Megalos pays lip service to the theory of feudalism, and uses many of its titles and structures, but this is deceptive. Observers from Caithness or backwoods Cardiel, accustomed to genuine feudalism, often find things in Megalos unfamiliar and subtly disturbing.

The reasons go back to Simon Menelaus (p. 10). He was not only a charismatic leader and an expert wizard – he had a broad education, and a fine library of historical texts from Earth. He learned strategy and tactics from these, but he was also interested in *political* history. He wanted to create an *empire*, with himself as its Caesar. He organized his new realm accordingly, and left notes and guidelines which are held in the palace library and studied by his heirs.

While he borrowed the forms of feudalism, Menelaus was not content to be a feudal king, first among equals. He made extremely sure that all of his nobles swore loyalty to the Crown and no one else, and perhaps more important, he created a standing army, under direct royal authority, modeled on the Roman legions (but with battle mages and more advanced weapons). By his design, all power flows to the center. He also had a utilitarian view of religion; his instructions to his heirs make it clear that, in the partnership of church and state, the emperor is the senior partner. He should work with religious leaders, but not permit them to claim superiority.

The "Rebel Lands"

When Megalos conquered the lands that became Cardiel and Caithness, it imposed authentic feudalism at the local level, as the most efficient way to handle frontier provinces. When these lands later declared independence, they retained the feudal titles, and indeed took them more seriously. Caithness, which had been the creation of a strong leader, became a kingdom; in Cardiel, the rebellion was the work of an alliance of nobles, who declared one of their own their Prince, but avoided giving themselves a king. Fealty is given rather more often to local nobles than to the Prince, and Cardiel remains only weakly unified.

Menelaus was broad-minded – he happily accepted nonhuman subjects – but stern and pragmatic, reviving Roman concepts such as arena combat. He set the tone for his realm, and the most successful emperors have followed his lead. What he created is an *autocracy*, where the governors of outlying regions think of themselves as feudal nobles, but respect and fear the greater power of the center.

Furthermore, noble titles in Megalos can be bought, for sufficiently large sums of money. Only a basic oath of loyalty to the throne is required, and no land is granted, but the social clout of these titles is quite real – in Megalos. Lords in other lands regard these men as impostors. For that matter, "old nobility" in Megalos (some of whose titles are only a few generations old) sometimes regard "new lords" with disdain. This makes the new lords all the more anxious to prove themselves, especially to the emperor, who usually regards them highly . . . as a source of wealth. The pursuit of wealth and naked power is a large part of Megalan society – exactly as Menelaus intended.

His scheme works better at some times than others, depending how well each emperor grasps the plan. For whole reigns, even centuries, the nobility have taken their feudal titles seriously, treated the legions as simply a palace guard, made policy, and started wars on their own account. In the 18th century, the entire province of Cardiel broke away and declared independence, followed in the 19th by Caithness.

In the 20th century, however, under a series of competent emperors, the pendulum swung back. This was helped by a series of minor defeats on the frontiers, which were blamed (inaccurately, but effectively) on provincial lords failing to follow Imperial military traditions. The legions grew stronger, and the power of the nobles diminished. Many were persuaded of the cultural superiority of the Imperial court; their fondest dream is now to become part of the centralized system, not to overthrow it. They not only send their children to be educated in strategy, magic, and statecraft at the palace, they travel there to attend great entertainments and petition for favors. The city of Megalos is the epicenter of fashion, and a feudal noble who is only interested in his own fief is disdained as a bucolic oaf.

Of course, such a system has the weaknesses of its strengths. The Megalan military machine is powerful but cumbersome. Provincial nobles can hold the borders against raiders and bandits, but they lack the military strength and initiative to deal with greater threats. Emperors sometimes become as decadent as any Roman; worse, they live in fear of their own legionary commanders. Having studied history, they know that a popular general would be well-placed to usurp them – so they rarely permit any legionary commander to become too strong. Such a general may be rotated to a quiet province with weak forces, recalled to the capital to be regaled with honors and kept by the emperor's side as an "advisor," or sometimes, if he shows signs of discontent and ambition, simply assassinated. This largely explains why Megalos has not substantially expanded its borders recently; no general could be permitted that much glory, and no emperor, however strategically skilled, can afford to spend long away from the capital.

Also, Megalan military confidence is *brittle*. The legions are formidable, but their training is based on centuries-old doctrines, and they refuse to believe that they could be beaten by bad luck or mere cleverness. Therefore, anyone who has beaten them in the past is secretly dreaded. They hold Northmen in contempt, but fear that their lands are a cursed graveyard for civilized men; they regard Caithness as civilized, but secretly believe that its low mana levels make magic useless save for the uncanny local wizards, and Caithness knights are surely all seven-foot-tall supermen (rather than merely brave and moderately lucky).

Aralaise Bureaucracy

As a province of the Empire, Araterre is nominally subject to the same political system. The reality is somewhat different.

The pseudo-feudalism which provides most of the Empire with a framework never arose naturally here, but was imposed externally, and hence is weaker; in any case, a realm of islands and seaports has to be run a little differently. The Prince holds a hereditary title (under the eye of Megalan "advisors"), and claims allegiance from a large class of local lords; few of these hold titles above baron, and many are simply knights. In any case, they lack wealth; the Princes have learned enough from Megalos to keep the taxes flowing to the center. What the Princes cannot do is exert the same detailed control that Megalan governments manage on the mainland.

The enfeebled lordlings thus govern the small, scattered farming communities of Araterre with a certain amount of impoverished independence. Some are just moderately wealthy farmers, some are basically hereditary plantation managers, and some derive a little more wealth and power from control of small fleets. Their vessels function as warships when called for feudal service, and mostly as merchantmen during peacetime – but Aralaise lords are notoriously quick to pursue "privateering" ventures, and some are simply "pirate knights." However, it is the Prince, the merchants, and the church who command real power.

While some younger sons of the petty-noble class become mercenaries, seafaring adventurers, or priests, some pursue opportunities at the Prince's court. As some sons of the merchant class do the same, hoping to acquire stylish titles, the Prince has a fair-sized pool of ambitious courtiers to draw on, and the talented or lucky can become crown servants or even town governors. Hence, Aralaise government is essentially a weak bureaucracy with several competing factions.

Muslim Government

Whereas Europe developed feudalism in the chaos following the collapse of Rome, Muslim society developed when a culture of nomad tribes and mercantile cities was united by a reasonably egalitarian religion, and then dominated by a series of powerful rulers. Hence, al-Haz and al-Wazif have at best only weak concepts of "nobility" or "aristocracy"; their rulers claim the status of "leaders of the faithful," working through appointed governors, military officers, and a bureaucracy. On the other hand, not only the throne, but many administrative and military positions are effectively, if not officially, hereditary.

Meanwhile, most of their subjects retain some degree of tribal loyalty. The tribes are led by "sheikhs," respected elders from powerful families, and many other social groups have borrowed the term; even the thieves of the great cities have their "sheikhs," although these are more like mob bosses. Finally, the mullahs and other religious figures (see p. 67) have considerable influence.

The resulting system somewhat resembles feudalism, but works rather differently. While there *is* a strong system of largely inherited social status, titles in Muslim lands are held by appointment, *not* inherited. Even where a position has become hereditary, the government must confirm the transfer from father to son.

Furthermore, in al-Haz and al-Wazif, while title-holders swear oaths comparable to feudal oaths of fealty, such oaths are always sworn to the man who is currently sultan or caliph, not to the Crown. When a monarch dies, all allegiances are cancelled. While this usually just means that government officials promptly swear a routine oath of loyalty to the new ruler, some will take the opportunity to retire or to negotiate for a new position . . . and sometimes, Muslim lands see bloody wars of succession.

The system in al-Wazif is slightly more feudal. Many people's primary loyalty is to a tribe or clan, which may be geographically scattered, rather than to a territorial holding, but there are also "landed 'amirs" who resemble Christian knights with landholdings which finance their military duties. However, a landed 'amir's holding is unlikely to be inherited by his son; it is a temporary government grant. In al-Haz, loyalty is mostly given to current office-holders, and the army is supported entirely by taxes rather than by land; the place is more of a bureaucracy, though higher administrative positions have become more or less hereditary.

In the Islamic countries, it is common for a landowner to bestow his holdings on his sons before his death. When the father dies, the oldest son is then usually in a strong position to become the head of the family, demanding loyalty from his siblings. This can lead to bitterness and rivalry, and sometimes even violence. Younger brothers may choose to walk away, saying that loyalty to the father does not imply loyalty to the brother. This produces a class of wandering sons of the gentry not unlike the knights-errant of Christian lands.

Tribalism

Some human-dominated areas of Yrth, especially the Nomad Lands, have never developed social organization above the local level. In such areas, each community is led by a chief (known as a jarl, headman, sheikh, or whatever) whose power extends as far as he and his allies can reach. This position may be hereditary, assigned by tribal elders or religious leaders (possibly from a small pool such as the most powerful families), or even elected (usually by a very *ad hoc* democracy). Occasionally, it is taken by force of arms, but that is rarely stable – the chief is in too much danger from the next social climber with a sword.

While tribal chiefs often command considerable respect, they also face considerable limitations. Some are held responsible for everything that happens to the tribe, up to and including the weather. They are usually expected to be very generous with gifts, although in that case they also *receive* a lot of gifts. This can leave them responsible for managing the

Nonhuman Government

Some Yrthian nonhumans have adopted human government systems, or at least borrowed titles and ideas to make dealings with humans more convenient. However, most are still more comfortable with those systems that they used before the Banestorm.

In truth, most races never had much more than a basic "tribal" system, with small groups led by some hereditary chief, honored elder, or mighty warrior. The elves once lived under something more complex, with both royalty and a ruling council, but that ended long ago. The dwarves have what seems to be the most "monarchical" system, but appearances often mislead; Zarak (pp. 157) is actually ruled by *seven* "kings," really more clan chiefs, and the "High King" is simply an elected first among equals.

Perhaps the most *interesting* system of leadership is found among the orcs, who will follow one of their number who demonstrates great "honor" – defined largely in terms of destructive power. It isn't sophisticated, and it certainly isn't stable; it makes for a lot of variation in army size from year to year – and sometimes from day to day.

tribe's economy, by hinting for gifts from one person and then giving the same things out to someone else with a greater need for them. Most also take a lot of advice from elders and shamans; how good that advice may be is another matter.

Sahud

Denizens of the rest of Ytarria know that Sahud is confusing, in its government above all else. This is true for outsiders, but the Sahudese themselves manage well enough. Their government is subtle and intricate, full of secrets and plots, and Sahudese politicians themselves tread very carefully, but it is not actually incomprehensible.

The early denizens of this region came from several different nations, and relationships between the first communities were very difficult, with serious problems of languages and customs. Hence, a great many complex and arbitrary protocols developed to ease relations. These people had brought a number of – mostly eastern Asian – social ideas with them, but few leaders or bureaucrats arrived or survived the initial confusion, so the early Sahudese had to hammer out an idea of government from garbled memories and partial understanding. They didn't really start trying for some years, having other things on their minds. Eventually, a sort of captive monarchy developed, but its peculiar origins meant that it quickly evolved into something rather stranger.

Modern Sahudese government could politely be described as a clan-based oligarchy headed by a "masked" monarchy. Less politely, it is a jerry-built mess with a surfeit of rituals. But it works; the respect which the "Heavenking" commands, as a sacred and stable element amongst all the clan conflicts, enables the court to exert as much steadying control as the society needs. Both the palace and some stronger clans employ quasi-Confucian systems of bureaucracy to administer their possessions, with limited success; basic Confucian ideals – somewhat-meritocratic government and respect for tradition – help moderate the intermittent chaos.

Towns

Towns and cities in Ytarria serve as centers for trade and handicraft industries. Indeed, a town is almost defined by its market; if it doesn't get customers, the town will collapse. The wealth flowing through such places makes them a source of tax revenue for senior nobles. Although feudal towns are smaller and rarer than industrial-age towns, they keep the land from slipping back into rural poverty.

Hence, kings and nobles encourage towns to grow in their territory, and even try to build them from scratch. This is hard; a town needs reliable food and water (it takes several peasants to feed one townsman), loyal citizens, secure walls, and lots of passing trade. But it can be done.

Townsfolk generally regard the feudal system, with its obsessions with land and farming, with disdain. To mitigate this, rulers grant towns great freedoms. These are usually expressed in a charter, which sets out the location of the town, its privileges, its taxes, and how its market should be run. All the citizens of the town are freemen under the lord or monarch, but most are loyal to the town first. By tradition, anyone who lives for a year and a day in a town becomes a free citizen, and townsmen defend this rule fiercely. Thus, many peasants dream of running away and becoming townsmen, despite the crowds, disease, and unemployment.

A townsman is free to move about, change jobs, and even set up a business (subject to guild rules; see p. 50). However, he is still considered inferior by any noble, and many a freeman has learned a painful lesson for not paying a noble due respect on the street. Still, any noble who gets a bad reputation in town may find his income mysteriously falling and his expenses rising.

City Guards

In any substantial town or city, there are likely to be two or more armed forces. Nobles and monarchs – especially those who claim authority over the place – keep at least a small personal guard, who they may use to enforce the law (probably selectively). Less glamorous are the "city guards" and the "town watch."

In small towns, these may be part-timers, working instead of paying taxes, with a mercenary sergeant or two to provide basic training and look after the guardhouse. In other cases, they are standing bodies of mercenaries, employed by the city council, governor, crown-appointed judge, or Muslim cadi. They have a divided duty: *guarding* the walls and gates, and providing law enforcement as a *city watch*.

These are the folks who break up tavern brawls, chase thieves, investigate murders (as best they can), toss drunks in the pond to sober up, and provide what little order a medieval-style town expects. They may also handle some fire-fighting. Their loyalty and efficiency depend on how well they're paid, the risks of the job, and how they were chosen. Few are highly competent (those who are get better jobs), and their equipment tends to be light: chainmail armor at best, and more likely leather, with light hand weapons only. (They have to walk around with their gear for hours at a time, and the city usually has to pay for it.) Mages have better things to do with their skills, but some towns have a junior wizard working part-time on the watch, or will pay a professional with information spells to help with difficult crimes.

While clever criminals can evade the guard for years, PCs of dishonest bent shouldn't push their luck. In particular, killing a watchman can make his brothers-in-arms dangerously annoyed.

Town Government

Towns have various forms of administration, but most are essentially run by councils of wealthy citizens. These may even be elected, in which case the voters will likely be limited to rich property-owners and the heads of guilds. The voting is often fixed, but it can give the people *some* say. *Mayors* are selected by the council, and have to keep them happy, in contrast to *governors*, who are appointed by the lord. Some councils are simply advisors, appointed by a governor.

Guilds

A guild is a society of people in the same craft or trade, typically based in a specific town. It usually secures a monopoly and limits the craft or trade to insiders. The guild also protects trade secrets, and sponsors the development of new knowledge. The formation of guilds is usually governed by the town's laws. Guilds in the same trade in neighboring towns may recognize each other's rules and qualifications, although there is sometimes aggressive rivalry. Guilds are financed by dues, a small fraction of members' incomes. A wealthy guild has a guildhouse where the masters keep records and enjoy great dinners; smaller guilds meet in inns or taverns, or even at a guild-master's home.

A guild performs several functions. It regulates the price and quality of goods or services, to ensure that its monopoly is not abusive to the point that the town demands its revocation. A guild "hallmark" on a product guarantees that it meets standards. The guild discourages its members from competing through bulk discounts or price-cutting, but encourages them to outdo each other in quality. The products of a guild's master craftsmen are reliable, but often costly.

A guild also provides for its members' well-being. Guilds regulate apprenticeships (most go to members' children), and make sure the trade is properly taught. Guild members are also provided with insurance; when they die, the guild takes care of their families. When shops or homes burn down, the guild pays for the rebuilding. When guild members become injured or ill, the guild hires healers. Some wealthy guilds even build hospitals, churches, and schools, or provide dowries for poor members' daughters.

Finally, a guild represents its members to the government. It seeks exemption from tolls and tariffs, protection along dangerous trade routes, and reduced taxes. For leverage, it relies on its monopoly. A baron trying to fight a war without armorers soon realizes the wisdom in granting the guild's demands!

Guild Organization

Guilds have three ranks; apprentice, journeyman, and master. At the bottom are apprentices, who cook, sweep, and run errands, while learning their trade from a master. But they are there to learn, and guilds discipline masters who use their apprentices as mere slave labor. Apprentices receive room, board and a meager stipend. When they have completed their studies and can demonstrate adequate skill, they become journeymen.

Journeymen are competent artisans who may work for any willing master, often traveling from town to town in search of employment. Many spend their entire lives at this level, earning an adequate living. However, a journeyman who feels ready and, more significantly, who can afford his own shop, may apply to become a master.

Masters are free tradesmen; they are supposed to demonstrate significant skill, perhaps by creating a "masterpiece," though standards vary. The masters run the guild, usually electing a council to handle routine details. The head of the council (who often has skill in both the craft and Diplomacy, Fast-Talk, and Politics) is an important figure in the town, and often automatically appointed to its council. Guilds are thus a route into politics.

A few guilds are more than just economic organizations; they are fraternal orders with rites of initiation, religious doctrines and secret agendas. Many have a patron saint (p. 60), in whose name they conduct private ceremonies. Some worship pagan gods in secret. Solemn rites and frightening oaths accompany events such as joining the guild, being promoted to journeyman or master, and the disciplining of errant members, impressing the need for secrecy. Some of these rituals are actually spells, which members learn as they advance.

Types of Guilds

The two major types of guilds are those for merchants and those for craftsmen. Merchant guilds (which are more common in Ytarria than in the European Middle Ages) are for those who buy and sell for a living, and may control trade throughout large cities, regions, or even countries. The members of craft guilds make goods or provide specific services; they are usually limited to single towns or neighborhoods. The two types of guild often do not get along; merchants prefer to buy low, craftsmen want to sell high.

A guild can only exist when it has at least a half-dozen members, and will not be powerful unless it has dozens. Thus, small towns have few guilds, while the great cities of Megalos have scores. This doesn't mean that craftsmen in small towns are always guildless, but where a town might have a single Clothmen's Guild, a metropolis has separate guilds for Spinners, Weavers, Tailors, Dyers, and Embroiderers. Guilds are most powerful in the free cities of Megalos and Cardiel, and weakest in al-Haz and Caithness.

While guilds are mostly background color for urban adventures, they can be central to plots. Guilds can hire PCs to protect members from attack by competitors (in the form of direct assaults or arson against

shops), or to enforce a monopoly, while those guilds with secret wisdom may need to protect it, or to acquire more of it.

Guilds Unique to Yrth

The Armsmen's Guild

In the chaos of humanity's first centuries on Yrth, the profession of arms became important in ways beyond the ideals of feudalism. Faced with unknown neighbors, supernatural monsters, and unstable political organizations, human society needed professional warriors who were willing to work for coin and were not tied to the land like knights.

Thus, mercenaries became widespread and respectable. Back on Earth, such people were often a menace, engaging in extortion and banditry when otherwise unemployed. With no place in a feudal system, they easily turned into outlaws. Ytarrian humanity had a better role for them and, as these fighters provided services for hire and were often based in towns, it was natural for them to form guilds. Because "armsmen" are necessarily often wanderers, the Armsmen's Guild is seen as a single body covering a very wide area, albeit loosely organized. Most members are considered journeymen; apprentices are raw recruits in larger companies, while the few masters are respected, grizzled soldiers, elected by the others.

This guild accepts most of those who fight for a living; guardsmen, mercenaries, tavern bouncers, bounty hunters, and battle-mages. As a rule, soldiers in service to a monarch or lord do *not* join, and only the poorest knight would need to. Towns large enough to support a guild-house often pay it a retainer to provide a fire brigade, made up of underemployed armsmen who need beer money. Its members may receive "bonuses" from citizens who want their street watched more attentively.

The Armsmen's Guild is where you go to hire a fighter – or if you are a fighter looking for work. It's also a good place to find a teacher of combat skills. Mercenaries who don't join should be careful in dark alleys, though their main problem will be that many employers won't take non-guildsmen.

Mages' Guilds

Like mercenaries and criminals, mages often hire out their services for cash, and may need an organizational structure. Hence, some cities and towns have "Mages' Guilds" alongside all the others. This is a generic term for a wide variety of organizations. Mages tend to be contentious; in any but the smallest town, if someone says "Mages' Guild," ask "Which one?" In many areas there are very old rivalries, and sometimes open battles. However, cooperation between guilds does happen. It can be necessary for enchanting great magic items, though items which require the skills of several guilds are extremely rare, and come only at great cost. Mages' Guilds are extremely jealous of their secrets.

Other mages form colleges, cults, secret societies (p. 52), or private clubs, any of which can perform the functions of a guild, and mages may be members of several such groups. Many towns have two or more groups setting fees for commercial spellcasting, and in this, the free market rules – and the buyer should beware.

Alchemists' Guilds

Alchemists' guilds fulfill all the functions of typical guilds, but in this case they also exist to protect the buyers . . . and the neighborhood. Unskilled or sloppy alchemists can easily poison their clients. Experimental or insane ones cause explosions. Such incidents bring the profession a bad reputation, to say the least. Thus, alchemists' guilds crack down very hard on anyone practicing their art without permission. Only the most isolated hermit-alchemists are free from a guild's firm hand.

Criminal "Guilds"

The guild system is a linchpin of Ytarrian society, providing ground rules for commerce and giving townsfolk a sense of where they stand. Hence, most humans see it as the natural way to run things. This assumption has even been applied to crime.

Everyone has heard about the Thieves' Guilds, although many doubt they exist. They do, although often they are simply gangs with pretensions. In a few cities, thieves are as organized as any other profession, as with the Brothers of Mercury (p. 101) in Yibyorak. They don't usually bother with formal apprenticeships and masterpieces, but they protect their monopoly as jealously as, and more violently than, any legal guild. This monopoly may be limited to straightforward theft, or it may encompass illegal gambling, slavery, smuggling, blackmail, prostitution, and protection rackets.

The guild *may* help its members, protecting them from authorities and paying off corrupt guards. It may be run by a criminal family, an especially tough thug, or an ambitious boss. Visiting freelancers tread carefully on guild territory, although many guilds will "license" independent jobs, and even provide advice and support – for a fee, obviously. The most formal guild is in Tredroy, where there are apprentice, journeyman, and master thieves, and the guild promotes a romantic image based on its activities during the Crusades, 500 years ago. Players considering playing thieves, affiliated or not, may wish to consult the *Urban Rogue* template (p. 216).

In other cities, someone reputed to be "the guild master" or "sheikh of thieves" is not usually the most skillful criminal, but may be the best connected, receiving respect and exerting influence. Someone who has had a valued or important item stolen, and can find this master, has a chance of getting it back, in exchange for a favor or "finder's fee." Streetwise skill is required to locate such a figure, if he (or she – a surprising number are female) exists at all. A failed roll can mean serious trouble.

Even more shadowy are the rumored Assassins' Guilds (not to be confused with the Hashishin, p. 72). The existence of one in Tredroy is fairly well-attested; that old, decadent, divided city supports such evils. Its members are also said to dabble in extortion, blackmail, and espionage, and to be led by the fabled "Silent Master." The nobility of Megalos certainly commission enough murders to keep a similar guild busy, but most say that the existence of a Megalan Assassin's Guild is just a rumor. Others say that their victims know better. For more on assassin characters, see p. 202.

Secret Societies and Conspiracies

Every human society has some secret societies, illicit conspiracies, revolutionaries, and private clubs. Yrth has more than its share.

When thousands of humans and nonhumans were dropped into an incomprehensible new situation, confronted with magical powers, and then united under a series of megalomaniac conquerors and wild-eyed idealists, it was inevitable that some groups would rebel against the new way of things and go underground. Some of these secret groups have survived since the first days of the Banestorm, while others have fallen or risen over time. Meanwhile, new influences and ideas have flowed through the Banestorm, to confront the older cliques and entrenched interests – and in the background, the paranoid nonhuman conspiracy which *created* the Banestorm still exists.

Wizardly Conspiracies

Wizards sometimes seem like natural conspirators. Marked out by exotic studies and interests, convinced of their own superiority thanks to their paranormal powers, and often blessed with the ability to communicate secretly by magic, they form secret societies almost by reflex. Then, when they gain power, they inevitably fall out, disintegrating into factions which ally with more mundane groups as they jockey for dominance.

Actually, many wizards – perhaps the majority – are either happy to sit quietly in their laboratories and towers pursuing abstract interests, or are moral, reasonable people who don't believe that being able to throw fireballs entitles them to boss the rest of the world around. However, the plotters and conspirators do tend to be noticed.

The main reason that wizardly conspiracies are rare is that most of the nations of Yrth have subsumed wizards in their power structures. Some lands draft them into government service, or offer them rewards and prestige for serving the Crown or nobility; others, less formally, tax them lightly and grant them respect in exchange for reasonable behavior and occasional assistance. While this is not enough for some megalomaniacs, most wizards realize, sooner or later, that they don't even *want* to rule the world that much. Magical power is more intellectually satisfying. However, this wisdom may come later rather than sooner. Some meddling spellcasters style themselves protectors of the trade, arguing they are sacrificing their own scholarly pursuits so others can continue to pursue theirs.

stable positions on the top of the heap might be seriously threatened by "super-weapons," wizards just seem to take the very idea of peasants able to hurl fiery destruction as a personal insult.

This *de facto* policy developed in the 15th century, as rulers and wizards with access to reports from Banestorm victims learned of developments on Earth. The wizards often led the way, with several instances of unofficial, illegal attacks on experimental weapon-makers. The policy became official, at least in Megalos, a century later, following the mass arrivals in Araterre, when shrewd battle-wizards pointed out that the

Fireballs vs. Gunpowder

One thing that enables wizards to suppress gunpowder so effectively is that magic can be so effective against it. Admittedly, a well-organized force with 20th-century firearms, who understood a little about magic, could probably slaughter opposing wizards and swordsmen quite brutally – but that isn't what experimenters on Yrth can deploy. Meanwhile, some wizards have developed basic magical anti-firearm tactics, and make a policy of circulating the information widely in wizardly circles. Ironically, this means that wizards tend to know more about gunpowder than most people on Yrth. While rumors circulate among the masses, the powers-that-be prefer to keep even its existence as secret as possible.

In brief, wizards have some idea how to identify gunpowder, and know a good deal about its characteristics – especially that it works very badly when damp, explodes very satisfyingly when set on fire, and requires some skill and care to use safely. Hence, wizards enforcing the ban may use wide-area water, fire, or mental confusion spells. They also know that Reverse Missiles is *very* effective against firearms. While these tactics are sometimes used with more enthusiasm than judgment, and more than one fireball-loving wizard has been blown up along with his target, they usually work fine. As a result, underground technologists tend to be *very* wary of using firearms openly; they're more likely to use it for sabotage or in traps.

The Technology Ban

One place where wizardly conspiracies align with the quiet backstage operations of secular power is the informal international agreement to prohibit gunpowder (see p. 30). While nobles suspect that their relatively superior technology these people were reported to wield could be a threat to the Empire.

Enforcement is handled by alliances of government servants and wizards, in proportions varying from land to land. In Megalos and al-Haz,

for example, the state mostly deals with such things, suppressing "rebels" with enthusiasm, and seeking out, interrogating, and magically manipulating Banestorm victims with an efficiency which worries wiser freelance wizards (who guess that information is being controlled but *not* destroyed). In Caithness, by contrast, the ruling classes have a more casual attitude and other things on their minds, and enforcement is largely left to local wizards, who may do anything from attacking "technologists" with fireball and lightning bolt, to inviting them to their towers for lunch, a philosophical chat, and a job offer, while politely hinting at the dangers of refusal. Many Caithnesser wizards employ agents to keep an eye open for underground technologists.

Pagan Cults

Paganism (see p. 76) survives on Yrth as a minority faith. It is the dominant religion of the Nomad Lands, but is subject to persecution in most nations. In a few regions, whole villages are overtly pagan, but this is dangerous; they can too easily become the targets for a localized crusade. If they are converted at swordpoint, they can at least preserve their old faith in secret; too often, though, they aren't given the option. Hence, throughout much of Yrth, paganism of one sort or another is the business of secret societies.

These range from small groups of surly, secretly rebellious peasants conducting unorthodox ceremonies in rural districts, to intellectual eccentrics in urban universities. Despite the propaganda directed against them, very few conduct human sacrifices or other dark rites; even if their beliefs encourage such things, the risks would simply be too great . . . most of the time.

Mystery Cults

Related to paganism, and often more or less pagan themselves, Yrth's mystery cults are distinguished by more specific objectives and much more *deliberately* obscure philosophies. While most straightforward pagans are secretive by necessity, these cults are secretive by choice, with beliefs which are only revealed in detail to new members after complex initiations. These often include terrifying vows, subtle psychological conditioning, or magical procedures to enforce loyalty. It's a very brave, strong-willed renegade who talks.

Mystery cults have a wide range of motivations. Some are religious above all, preserving pagan ideas or radical heresies; some are political revolutionaries, using mystical imagery and techniques to preserve secrecy. A few exist to preserve secular magical techniques, such as little-known spells, which *may* actually give their members an economic, social, or combat advantage. Some are actually harmless social clubs with a childish fondness for strangeness (which may land them in deep trouble with suspicious outsiders). And a very few are venues for illegal hobbies or peculiar sexual activities, whether harmless or viciously depraved.

Most mystery cults are small and based in a single location, or a specific craft or profession in a specific area. Preserving secrecy is hard otherwise. However, a few have created networks across larger areas, with secret signs and passwords permitting members to find friends when they travel. A member of one of these groups would have a dangerous Secret, and perhaps Enemies in the church or rival cults, but also a Claim to Hospitality from fellow members.

It is sometimes possible for enemies to infiltrate such groups by learning these secrets, but that can be a dangerous project.

Bardic Colleges

A combination of ancient Celtic religious traditions, the medieval regard for minstrels, ideas from Sufi Islam (p. 70), and a style of magic based on music and song, has produced Yrth's "Colleges of Bards."

This is a very loose network of groups which espouse music-based mysticism and magic. Most function as schools and social clubs, bringing members and students together to exchange ideas and socialize. Bards tend to be mutually loyal and very protective of their "rights and privileges," so the Colleges are to some extent a trade guild and mutual protection society. However, their relationships with more mundane guilds of minstrels or entertainers vary widely.

Diabolical Cults

Most humans on Yrth believe in the existence of very literal, physical demons and devils; some, especially wizards, have seen concrete evidence and survived. Mostly, people rationally decide that they want as little to do with such things as possible; the threat of eternal damnation may not keep everyone on the straight and narrow, but the balance of risks appears such that most folk will not actually, willingly commit themselves to Evil with a capital "E."

But there are always exceptions. Some people are natural rebels, led into excess by their own perversity, while others think that they have *nothing* to lose. Attempts by priests to warn of the dangers of evil may have the reverse of the intended effect, making some listeners interested in the diabolical gifts which the preachers say are so tempting. And, of course, some people have grudges against the church, or against religion in general, and feel that "the enemy of my enemy is my friend." A persecuted mystery cult can go from innocent paganism to genuine demonism simply in self-defense.

Hence, Yrth has a smattering of demon-worshippers and other groups who dedicate themselves to supernatural evil. Some are foolish (if dangerous) dabblers, with no actual contact with genuine supernatural beings. A few, unfortunately, are contacted or led by supernatural beings of real power and malevolence. One or two are in touch with *things* that seem to frighten even demons.

Colleges range in size and formality from a permanently established school on the northern edge of the Great Forest in Caithness, through secret societies in Megalos, to circles of one master and two or three students in the cities of Cardiel and Araterre. Bards see the skalds of the Nomad Lands (p. 171) as colleagues, while skalds see Bards as almost worthy of respect, for southerners, despite their foppish manners and use of magic. Bards are largely unknown and sometimes distrusted in Muslim lands, although the colleges do have some friends among the Sufi schools.

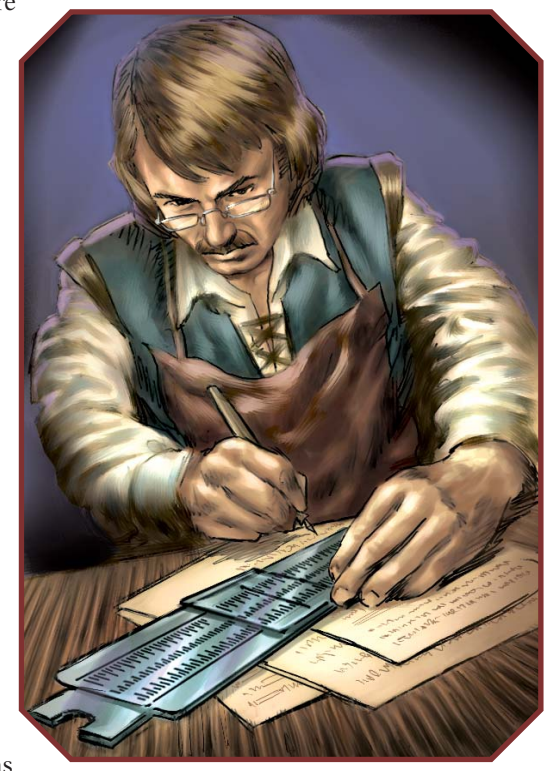
Many of the colleges will teach anyone who comes to them with a sincere wish to learn, but they favor students with *limited* Magery (usually "Musical" or "Song," sometimes "Dance"), and are very adept at locating and recruiting such. Many have other magical advantages as well. Primarily, however, the Colleges are Yrth's chief teachers of Enthrallment and Musical Influence skills, which are their hallmark and perhaps their monopoly (if only because anyone using them can be considered a bard).

The Colleges also provide Patrons or Contacts, and most bards have a Sense of Duty to the network (or at least their own college). Many have disadvantages such as Compulsive Carousing, Disciplines of Faith (Mysticism), Phobia (Claustrophobia or Demophobia), or Vows such as "Never sleep in the same place for more than a week," but none of these are mandatory except in some specific colleges. Quirks such as "Considers himself a citizen of the world" are common.

Bards are not, in fact, united by religion, although a few of them have a priestly function in pagan communities. They are singer-mystics with a keen interest in the natural world, and a belief that too many personal possessions, or even remaining for too long in one place, "fetters the soul," preventing proper mystical development. They actually include members of almost every religion on Yrth, despite their pantheistic attitude and taste for mystical philosophy, though some religious leaders denounce them.

Personally, bards tend to be flamboyant and unpredictable. They can seem amoral, self-indulgent, or shallow, but the most serious among them are intent on their pursuit of mystical truth. At their worst, they see themselves as above "mundane concerns," while demanding to be respected. At best, they are superb entertainers with unique magic and a deep love of freedom.

Bards do not qualify for Legal Immunity (Bardic Immunity), except in the domains of wildly romantic Caithnessian barons; many a cocksure bard has been thrown out of a great house – or worse – for offending the lord. Some other bards will aid in seeking revenge for such slights; most will consider the victim a fool. However, there are quite a few romantics in Caithness, so a limited, 5-point version of this advantage might be available to bards in campaigns based there. A bard visiting the Nomad Lands does not automatically acquire Skaldic Immunity (p. 171), although one displaying enough skill, in accordance with local poetic styles, might be able to claim it, or at least a positive Reputation as "almost a skald" (purchased with experience points). See their character template for more information (p. 203).



The Underground Engineers

Not every new immigrant to Yrth gets caught by the authorities, and some survive long enough to realize the danger they're in, and acquire the skills necessary to disguise their origins. Most who succeed at this go on to lead boring low-tech lives, but a few decide to try and change things. Some of them have the skills to do so, which they secretly teach to locals. Even with magic, the church hierarchy, and major governments all working against them, some ideas survive.

Meanwhile, the general suppression of, not just gunpowder, but advanced technology generally, has inevitably produced a reaction. In places, it's been enforced so heavy-handedly that ordinary craftsmen with a talent for clever but simple contraptions feel harassed and oppressed. There are also a few bright locals who've heard vague rumors of the wonders of Earth; many of these individuals – engineers, craftsmen, soldiers, doctors, minor lords – have heard enough about secrets locked away in the great palaces and wizards' guilds to become angry that they are being deprived of so much that could make their lives easier or more interesting.

Thus, Yrth has a "technological underground" – a secret brotherhood of students of advanced ideas, which has, over the centuries and despite considerable risks, become an international conspiracy. However, it's not in any way centralized or hierarchical – which is one of the things that makes it so hard to destroy. A precious few members have supporters in the craft guilds (though those tend to be staunchly conservative), and even communicate through guild channels. In many areas, the movement is primarily a circulating library for banned

texts; in others, it's a rather unfocused revolutionary brotherhood. See the box on p. 30 for a discussion of typical underground engineer capabilities.

While most underground engineers focus obsessively on technology and to a lesser extent science, some become involved with other matters. Finding themselves in opposition to the authorities, they naturally feel sympathy with other anti-establishment groups, and some are entangled in revolutionary politics (although many, being rather idealistic, find the violence and compromise that such alliances entail deeply distasteful). Others again, aware that the established religions are involved in the suppression of technology, see themselves as heretics and freethinkers. Some, studying illegal texts which have arrived from Earth, are aware that some radical *theological* ideas are also being suppressed, and suspect that there is a direct link between innovations in science, philosophy, and theology, leading them to involvement in movements such as Protestantism (see box). Thus, the reactionary nobility of Ytarria assert that the underground engineers are allied with dangerous political radicals preaching democracy or communism, and sometimes that's true.

For this group's character template, see p. 215 Separately from human engineers, some dwarves are also interested in technology (and are more literally "underground"). See p. 161.

Spy Rings

Espionage is a popular tool among the national conflicts and rivalries of Yrth. Some spies are dedicated to a nation or religion; others are "freelancers," selling their skills in the market. The latter have semi-formal organizations of their own, some of which are old and large enough to have traditions and hierarchies.

That said, a typical Yrthian spy ring is a small, paranoid group dedicated to a specific short-term objective, and certain to break up sooner or later. The rings which hold together for longest need some combination of strong motivation (often serving, not just a nation, but an associated faith or ideology), skilled and charismatic leadership, exceptional professionalism, and plain luck. A little subtle magic can help, too.

While Yrthian espionage remains less sophisticated than that seen in the high-tech conflicts of Earth, competent observation of opponents' military activities can often be crucial in war. In the absence of high-tech mass communications, many useful agents never seek out actual secrets at all; they simply keep their eyes and ears open, collate publicly available information, and report it to spymasters with a talent for wading through masses of disorganized facts.

Protestantism

The mass of Banestorm victims arrived on Yrth long before the Protestant Reformation on Earth. When a significant number of Protestants *did* appear in Araterre and Cardiel in the 16th century, the church and the secular powers suppressed this "menace" ruthlessly as soon as they learned of its pervasiveness. However, their victory was never absolute. Cardiel, a land which had been forced by circumstances to learn tolerance, refused to repress this sect among many, while elsewhere, devout believers survived in hiding, or kept their faith secret. Furthermore, a few more fall through the Banestorm every decade.

Hence, Protestantism survives today as a leading underground belief-system, and even operates publicly in a very few areas. The largest tradition is that of the Huguenots, a French group which arrived through Araterre, and "Protestant" and "Huguenot" are interchangeable terms for most people.

Protestantism on Yrth is devout and uncomplicated, it being hard to keep casual faith or a complex system of organization going in the face of sporadic but brutal repression. Beliefs that, on Earth, would be considered Lutheran, Methodist, Baptist, or Quaker, all mingle freely, and few Protestants squabble about theology among themselves. While there is also an "Episcopalian" strand, there is no generally recognized hierarchy of Protestant bishops; indeed, most Protestant priests on Yrth would be considered lay preachers on Earth, and many Protestant congregations have no priest at all, as a matter of doctrine as well as necessity. Leadership positions are elected and unpaid. Church buildings are very austere, often little more than meeting houses.

Protestantism still survives in Cardiel, although Protestant characters there might take Social Stigma (Second-Class Citizen). In Tredroy, whose citizens seem to delight in outraging the rest of Yrth, Protestantism has both an administrative leader (the Secretary of the Protestant Congregation) and some excellent general schools. The latter have such a high reputation that they attract some non-Protestant pupils.

Ironically, the other land where Protestants are permitted to pursue their faith, albeit under constraints, is Muslim al-Wazif. Muslims consider Protestants to be fellow monotheist "People of the Book," no more or less misguided than other Christians. Indeed, they have some respect for the Protestant eschewal of images and icons, finding it preferable to the mainstream Church's "idolatry." Some Muslim rulers are also pleased at the idea of division among their religious foes, and happily provide quiet hospitality to those who annoy mainstream Christians. Hence, there are open Protestant congregations in some Wazifi cities, although all Christians have to step carefully in less cosmopolitan parts of that nation. In theory, the same principles ought to apply in al-Haz, but the official Muslim tolerance of Christians is stretched thin there at the best of times, and the rulers, knowing that Huguenots are considered outcasts by their fellow Christians, take this as an excuse to suppress them.

Chapter Three
Religion

"Rank heresy! Typical Cardien decadence!"

The accusation echoed around the meeting hall in the chapter-house of Aliar cathedral. However, its apparent target, the Archbishop of Tredroy, merely blinked at the dangerous word.

"I do hope the good Brother Hugo is not still concerned about my deacons?" he asked mildly.

Across the table, Brother Hugo scowled furiously. Being cranky and inflammatory were the least of his talents. He was a Hospitaller knight of the old school, whose opinions on both the moral legitimacy of magic and the validity of nonhuman conversions were well known. The deacons in question were a Jesuit-trained wizard and a hobgoblin convert whose grasp of theology was generally reckoned to be less significant than his talents as a bodyguard. However, the Curia's doctrines on these matters were clear.

"I make no comment on the good father's taste in household staff," he snarled. "I am referring to his unconscionable support for the Friedrichite necromancers."

*The Archbishop frowned slightly. "I offer no such support," he declared. "I but observe that, given their success in missionary work, it is only pragmatic to permit them to establish themselves in Tredroy. Especially as their rather bizarre powers actually show no sign of necromancy, or even of wizardry. In any case, even if – **if** – we could persuade the governor to drive them out, they would simply cross the bridge and re-establish themselves on the other side."*

"Hah! So they're in league with the Muslims, then! So much for missionary work!"

*"Say rather that the Emir is clever enough to tolerate them for a while to discommode **us**. They might annoy him sooner or later, of course, and be driven out or be martyred. But the Emir is rather weak in his faith, and very clever as a ruler . . ."*

"Of course! He's an infamous necromancer!"

Comparative Theology

All devout people believe that their god exists. Monotheists mostly deny the existence of other gods; pagans tend to be more accommodating. Further, some people have evidence of various gods' reality, in the form of "divinely granted" abilities.

The monotheists reconcile this by stating that powers apparently granted by those other gods actually come from demons or other lesser beings posing as gods. Thus, many Christians believe that any abilities worshippers get from Odin, Ganesh, et al, are actually tricks of Satan. *Extremely* liberal followers of the Church might grant, for instance, that "Hermes" is a moderately powerful and non-malevolent *spirit,* but almost none are open to the idea of multiple gods.

Regardless of their true nature, the gods of Yrth evidently only interfere on the level of individuals. Their miracles are relatively small and personal, not world-shattering. If they compete directly, Ytarrians aren't aware of it. None seem to be more powerful than others; the Christian God has a wider selection of followers to empower, but the abilities He grants do not on average appear greater than those given by Odin.

At the head of the table, Gareth, bishop of Aliar and host of this conference, sighed quietly. They were supposed to be finding a way to stem the tide of Protestant broadsheets flowing from the uncensored presses of Tredroy, but that subject had hardly been mentioned for two days. He was seriously contemplating permitting Count Faramon to learn that a banned Hospitaller had somehow slipped into the city. If the insufferable Hugo were forced to leave, Gareth and the Archbishop doubtless could solve this problem with much less fuss, and then Gareth could invite the archbishop's famous household company to perform a masque . . .

Different Yrthian races and regions subscribe to varying beliefs, and as the crusades attest, not everyone approves of everyone else's gods. However, almost every sapient being in Ytarria respects the need for religion and its vital centrality to life, regardless of form. Some areas enjoy more religious freedom than medieval Europeans typically did. Many have also escaped the Megalan Empire's unilateral espousal of Christianity, either by resisting assimilation, defecting and establishing independence, or simply keeping their real faith hidden. While secular rulers make sure the church's political authority remains secondary to their own, faith drives much of the world's politics and permeates daily life. Here the supernatural is undeniably real, and materialistic science has never caught on.

Whether or not an individual PC is in any degree devout, he should understand the beliefs that motivate everyone around him. There's no need to study every faith practiced in Ytarria, but familiarity with local beliefs is essential. Laws against heresy or blasphemy are often stern, and ignorance of those laws is no defense. Indeed, in some eyes it makes the offense worse!

Anyone visiting regions dominated by some other religion will greatly extend their life expectancy by getting the basics down. Spiritual belief in Yrth is virtually instinctive; adventurers ignore this at their peril.

Christianity

The most widespread faith on Yrth, Christianity is the state religion of Megalos, Caithness, and Cardiel, though that last welcomes folk of all faiths. Members of other races, particularly gnomes, goblins, halflings, and kobolds, have also adopted this religion.

History

Initially, clergymen on Yrth maintained nominal allegiance to Earth's pope, but Christians in various regions, forced to deal with varying social and political realities, soon became too contentious to grant supreme spiritual authority to one person. The small kingdoms of the 11th and 12th centuries frequently fought wars over religious issues, and it was impossible to say who was "faithful" and who was "heretical."

Megalos ended most of the turmoil by forming the Empire: by 1400, virtually all Christians in Ytarria were Imperial subjects. However, often-violent doctrinal disputes continued. In 1403, Emperor Antonius II ordered his knights to abduct the five most prominent clergymen under Megalan rule. They were forced to stay at the Cathedral of St. Paul in Mehan until they resolved their differences. Voluntary or not, this amounted to the first Conclave of Archbishops, now termed the Curia (p. 61).

The One True Faith

The Church has many faces: worldly and influential in Megalos, austere and pious in Caithness, and unassuming and domestic in Cardiel. However, it uniformly insists Christianity is the only true religion. The Curia sees no need for any name other than "The Church." (In this book, it is sometimes referred to as the Ytarrian Church to distinguish it from the many versions of Christianity on Earth.)

Megalan faith teaches that humanity regained its chance for a happy afterlife when Jesus of Nazareth, the Son of God, died on the Cross to atone for the world's sins. After three days, he rose from the grave and ascended to Heaven. Jesus, God, and the Holy Ghost make up the Trinity, the Divine Being.

But Jesus' gift is not enough to assure that one's soul will go to God. Since all people share in the original sin of Adam and Eve, all need to be saved, no matter how purely they live. Good works are beneficial but don't satisfy salvation's requirements. Thus the central theme of the Ytarrian Church's teaching is salvation through the *sacraments* (p. 58); without them, there is no hope of heaven. Excommunication denies one access to these rituals, effectively damning the soul, which is why any serious Christian of

Beings With Souls

The Church eventually decided many nonhuman races on Yrth have souls. Goblins, halflings, reptile men, and other comparable races are all marked by original sin and can attain Heaven; as such, they can also become priests or clergy. However, doctrine also says certain kinds of intelligent beings do *not* have souls capable of salvation, including demons, Sahudese spirits (considered a type of demon), medusas, trolls, and vampires. The Church regards lycanthropes as people whose souls may be in serious jeopardy if their behavior is animalistic enough when in the clutches of their disease. For other creatures (like dolphins), the question has never been seriously discussed.

Yrth will likely avoid this fate at all costs. Christians may atone for sins through penance while alive on Yrth or in Purgatory after dying. Such reparational duties are assigned by a priest after hearing confession; they usually involve good works, hard prayer, or perhaps payments to a good cause. Upon passing the mortal veil, the faithful are rewarded in Heaven; nonbelievers, heretics, and the excommunicated suffer eternally in Hell. Heretics usually have *been* excommunicated, but they're not the only ones who suffer this judgment.

The Church preaches the virtues of prayer, charity, confession, forgiveness, and humility. Obedience to God's will, as revealed through His priests, is required. The word of God, His laws, and the story of Jesus' life are all spelled out in the Bible.

The Curia has officially declared magic to be a tool; in and of itself, it is neither good nor evil, though it can be used toward either end. Black magic like necromancy is a grave sin. Openly practiced battle magic is not. The doctrine is quite pragmatic; without magic, Megalan armies would be crippled.

In practice, Ytarrian Christians regard magic with everything from enthusiasm to deep hostility. Some seminaries require all priests to learn a little magical theory; others prohibit it outright. For more on such attitudes, see *Heresy*, p. 60.

The Sacraments

The primary rituals of the Ytarrian Church, the Seven Sacraments are baptism, confirmation, confession and penance, communion, matrimony, ordination, and last rites.

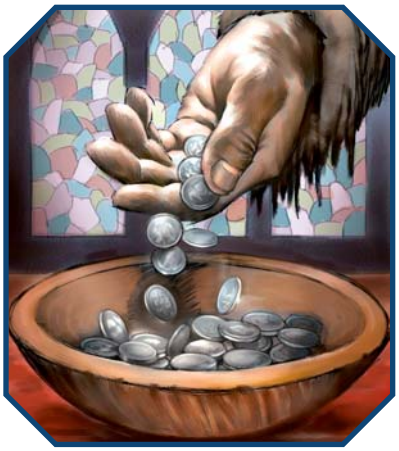
Baptism, which removes the taint of original sin from a baby's soul, happens shortly after birth. Without baptism, a newborn who dies will at best go to Purgatory, at worst Hell. Confirmation usually happens at age seven and makes children full members of the Church. After that, they are required to attend confession and allowed to celebrate communion. A Christian should confess his sins to a priest *at least* once or twice a year and perform the specified penances. During holy communion, the worshipper consumes the body and blood of the Son of God in the form of bread and wine; this reconsecrates the soul to Jesus, essentially renewing the soul's relationship to the divine. To prepare souls for the afterlife and help ensure acceptance into Heaven, priests perform last rites upon dying Christians just before or soon after physical death. To give the soul the best chance at Heaven, last rites include final confession and absolution when possible.

Just as knights are dubbed, priests are ordained. They conduct mass, the primary gathering for prayer, regularly; most ordinary Christians attend on Sundays. Services are conducted in Latin. Only priests can perform sacraments, although those lacking Clerical Investment (p. B43) occasionally baptize and marry people as well as giving them last rites, particularly if a priest is not available.

Canon Law

The Megalan philosopher-monk Domitus first collated the principles of Ytarrian canon law in the year 1578. The "Domitian Code" contains complete rules for the business of the Church: heresy (p. 60), excommunication, tithes, administration of church lands, governance of monastic orders, dealings with non-Christians, conduct of holy war, relations between Church and state, and punishment of wayward clergy.

Canon law covers many areas of secular life as well; rulers generally accept these principles, if only for convenience. The prescribed punishments for disobeying Church law range from minor penance and fines to maiming, excommunication, and death. For physical punishments, however, the Church can only make recommendations to secular authorities. In Megalos, these recommendations are generally enforced; in Caithness and especially Cardiel, they are treated more as guidelines.



Tithing

A tithe is essentially a tax paid to the Church, although the Curia refer to such payments as "donations." This typically amounts to 10% of one's yearly income or productivity; since feudal societies often possess little cash, payments may range from sheep to services rendered. Most tithes are paid directly to the local parish, which passes some of those funds up the hierarchy and uses the rest itself. If a feudal lord is a cleric as well, the tax his peasants owe him may stand in for their tithe, but this isn't always the case; sometimes they end up paying both tithe and tax to him.

One can technically get into heaven without tithing at all since it doesn't stand as one of the sacraments, but the Church has been known to excommunicate those who refuse to make payment for several years without a good reason. Social propriety practically demands the satisfaction of this canonical law, regardless of personal wealth, so most imperial citizens fulfill this duty every year.

Marriage

Children can be betrothed at any age by their parents but may not marry until age 15. The Church prefers to sanction all marriages but does not require they be performed by

a priest. It prohibits polygamy and marriage between people who have a common ancestor within three generations. A marriage is not valid until consummated. The Church can grant special dispensations regarding these rules.

When a woman marries, her new husband expects a dowry – her contribution, in lands, goods, or money, to the new household. Parents with any social status try to ensure their daughters have substantial dowries. Such a woman has a wider choice of husbands and may attract a match above her own status. A groom must in turn grant his new wife an interest in his holdings or pay a bride-price to her parents. (This does not make her his property; women have specific rights under canon law.) A dowry is usually equal to four months' living expenses for the bride's social status. The bride-price is about one month's expenses for the groom's social status.

The Church frowns upon divorce, granting it only in cases of the wife's adultery or heresy by either party. Barrenness is sometimes given as the reason for such judgments, but the Curia have yet to rule conclusively on this matter. An ex-wife gets her dowry back unless she was at fault. The bride-price is nonrefundable. On rare occasions, the Church might annul a marriage for other reasons, usually political; if the joining can be proven illegal, in theory it is certain to be annulled – a rule which powerful people frequently abuse.

Relics and Pilgrimages

Relics are objects with miraculous powers derived from their holy origins. Many can supposedly heal the incurable. A few Christians brought – or claimed to have brought – Earth relics with them through the Banestorm. The Ytarrian Church soon developed its own relics as well.

The most common type of relic is all or part of the corpse of a saint. The burial places of saints radiate great holiness; ground-level cathedral altars often are erected directly over these tombs, which usually reside in the basement. Many people carry bits of hair or scraps of clothing that reputedly belonged to a saint. A relic's inherent power is supposed to protect and bless the person or congregation that possesses it.

Faith in the power of relics is so great that many people travel long distances and pay large sums to touch or view one. Churches consider catering to pilgrims important business . . . so much so that fake relics abound. At least three Yrthian cathedrals and two monasteries claim to have the corpse of St. Michael Olybrius, and both the Templars and the Hospitallers allegedly possess the head of John the Baptist.

Pilgrims most often travel to St. Paul's in Mehan, where a piece of the True Cross is on display; Serrun Cathedral, under whose altar St. Michael Olybrius is supposedly buried; Martyr's Oak, near Alimar in Cardiel, where heretics allegedly hung St. Bertram; and the tomb of St. Giles the Kind, in Craine. Pilgrimages can muster diverse characters – such as a new or established group of PCs – for weeks or months, offering plenty of opportunity for adventure along the journey. Geoffrey Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales* provides much insight into the politics of such collectives as well as the personalities players might encounter on a pilgrimage.

Probably the best way to translate relics into game terms is to introduce an item with the advantages Healing (Faith Healing) and/or True Faith, with a Gadget Limitation (usually both Can Be Stolen and Unique). Similarly, players must buy these advantages for any relics their characters own. Note that the relic might only "work" for a few people who focus their intense faith through it.

A relic that provides other benefits might be described in terms of other advantages. On examination, some such objects might turn out to actually be "secular" magic items. Wizards who explain this to the faithful may *not* be applauded for their honesty . . .

Inheritance

The Domitian Code outlines rules of inheritance. Secular laws and traditions often override this in practice, but church law seeks to ensure that debtors, widows, orphans, and unmarried daughters are properly looked after, which is widely respected. Canon law also encourages bequests to the Church, which sometimes proves actively contrary to feudal rules. By both canon and most secular laws, alternative dispositions must be arranged in advance in a written will, which a priest must sign and approve.

Oaths

Virtually all oaths and contracts are sworn in the name of God or Jesus. Therefore, perjury or breaking a contract constitutes a serious crime under canon law. Usually, the Church assigns a penance: a fine, prayer, and a service of some sort, or occasionally physical punishment. When oath-breakers violate commercial contracts, they forfeit any goods or money involved.

Usury

The Domitian Code forbids charging exorbitant interest. It originally sought to ban Christians from lending money at all, but this proved impractical, and even weak laws favored Jewish merchants too much. Today, no Christian may charge more than 30% annually on money loaned to another Christian.

Slavery

Officially, the Church frowns on slavery as contrary to the Christian spirit of brotherly love. Practice, as with so many things, differs. Canon law merely restricts who can be made a slave; it is illegal for one Christian to own another against the other's will. Enslaving pagans, heretics, infidels, the excommunicated, and soulless beings is perfectly legal. Indenture (selling oneself into slavery for a limited time, usually to pay a debt) is also allowed.

As a result, many slaves in Christendom are infidel prisoners-of-war. In the Megalan Empire proper, however, serious crimes often carry slavery as sentence. (For formal correctness, local bishops may excommunicate convicted criminals.) Many theologians criticize this practice, but those who profit from it tend to ignore such complaints.

Indulgences

Sin is always evil, and justice demands a sinner pay for his crimes. Thus, priests impose temporal punishments known as penance at the time of the sin's confession. The practice of selling *indulgences* to sinners – absolutions purchased with money – is controversial, but priests practice it openly in Megalos. The Church in Caithness and Cardiel strictly forbids this method of fundraising. The Curia has never ruled on the matter despite debating it often and enthusiastically.

People are *not* allowed to buy indulgences pre-emptively. The payment is supposed to indicate *penitence*. Securing absolution before the fact, at best, indicates the sin might have been premeditated. At worst, it contravenes the basic precepts of Christianity and makes a travesty of the entire concept of confession.

Typical prices for indulgences run about five farthings ($5) for intoxication, six pennies ($24) for fornication, 12 pennies ($48) for fraudulent trading, a half-mark ($100) for adultery, one mark ($200) for sodomy, and five pounds ($5,000) for killing an opponent in a duel. A few indulgences have been sold for premeditated murder (at least 20 pounds – $20,000) and even for black magic (around 50 pounds – $50,000). However, most priests consider such crimes to a require extended shows of repentance and penalties beyond the financial; selling instant forgiveness for extreme vileness is too *blatant* for even very cynical clerics.

Heresy

Heresy is a religious belief which contradicts some specific teaching of the Church while following others. Many churchmen find heresy among their co-religionists to be more threatening than any cult or rival faith.

Christianity on Yrth has spawned numerous heretical offshoots. The Church has suppressed most of them, but others survive, often in remote rural areas, unknown to the Curia. If it can agree that there is a problem, the Curia may declare a radical theologian or a whole overly independent monastic order to be heretical.

Theoretically, the punishment for heretics who refuse to recant is death at the stake, though enforcement often varies with politics and the concern of local churchmen for Christian forgiveness and avoiding making martyrs; a show of repentance can save the accused, and some, with friends, influence, or good arguments, spend years in prison or even free, haggling over their relationship with orthodoxy. Others, seen as rebels, may be slaughtered without even a trial.

Saints

The Church recognizes thousands of saints: men and women who led extraordinarily holy lives and perhaps died in the service of God. Such folk are believed to reside in Heaven but may act upon mortal prayers, sometimes miraculously. Their power, however, is never their own; it derives from God. The Church treads carefully when distinguishing between "ordinary" magic and acts of a divine nature. How they draw the distinction is another matter.

On Earth, the Pope decides who is canonized; since Yrth lacks any pope, this responsibility falls to the Curia. Saints borrowed from Earth are saints here without argument. Yrthians usually must perform a certain number of miracles to be considered for canonization. Martyrdom always helps, though.

Almost every profession, city, guild, church, or monastic order has a patron saint; even specific animals, illnesses, and situations have them. A few popular saints and their areas of responsibility are listed below. All the ones here are human, but this certainly doesn't mean there aren't saints of other races out there.

Some saints hail from Earth traditions. Others lived and died on Yrth. Many "emigrated" to Yrth and were adjusted to fit the new world; sometimes their legends evolved based on Ytarrian events.

Andrew: Fishermen, sailors, Banestorm victims.
Barbara: Miners, sailors, metalworkers, help against sudden death.
Bertram: Cardiel.
Brigid: Milkmaids, poets, nuns, fugitives, blacksmiths, healers.
Catherine: Girls, students, libraries, philosophy, wheels.
Christopher: Travelers.
Constantine the Great: Bureaucrats.
Cuthbert: Shepherds, sailors, seals.
Denis: Araterre.
Elmo: Maritime magic.
George: Caithness, soldiers, chivalry, monster-slaying.
Honorius: Megalos (he was the first Megalan archbishop).
James the Great: Crusades.
John the Baptist: Midsummer, the Hospitallers.
Luke: Physicians, artists, glassmakers, priest-wizards.
Margaret of Antioch: Childbirth, nurses, peasants.
Mary (the Virgin Mary): The Mother of Christ and Queen of Heaven.
Michael Olybrius: Nonhumans who convert to Ytarrian Christianity, the Olybrian Order.
Peter: Boatmen, fishermen – often invoked during Banestorms.
Raphael: Lovers, pharmacists, young travelers.
Sebastian: Archers.
Theodosius: Horses.
Thomas: Mages and magic, builders, geometry.

Heresies and Magic

Many heresies revolve around magic and nonhumans. Some maintain that magic is forbidden, and wizards are all servants of the Devil. The now-suppressed Penitentines (p. 94) believed this, claiming that Yrth was Purgatory, the humans there were sinners serving penance, and nonhumans were corruptor demons. Penitentine fanatics waged campaigns of terror against mages and nonhumans.

On the other hand, at least one cult, the Manites, believes that mages are God's chosen. Their inner circle of Manites seeks to recruit people with magical ability. Many wizards worry that the cult will create an anti-mage backlash. The Church considers the Manite beliefs heretical and would not hesitate to act forcefully if it realized they were being spread by an organized group of power-seekers. See *The Manites*, p. 94.

Protestantism

Protestants (see p. 55) deny some Ytarrian Church doctrines and so are considered heretics. The Church persecutes them everywhere in Megalos ,and when they can in Caithness.

Schism

When a heretical belief takes strong root, or when a doctrinal disagreement divides church leaders, into fairly equal parties, the result can be a schism . . . a splitting of one faith (or at least one hierarchy) in two. On earth, Protestantism represented a schism from the Catholic Church, but on Yrth, the Protestants are outsiders. The Church has never experienced a faith-based schism. However, a schism can be political in nature, as happened in Caithness 200 years ago (see p. 110).

Local Heresies

A common issue, too trivial to be counted as heresy by most churchmen, occurs in isolated farming villages where pagan nature worship gets mixed into Christian beliefs. These beliefs usually involve fertility rites to ensure a bountiful harvest.

The Curia

The Conclave (p. 57) is now known as the Curia. It consists of the Grand Masters of the Olybrians, the Templars, the Hospitallers, and the Thomasites, and the nine archbishops. Caithness has one archbishop, Cardiel three, and Megalos five. Cities and large towns have resident bishops.

The initial five Curia members realized they needed archbishop titles for their decisions to carry proper weight with the rest of the Church, so they essentially assumed that rank by fiat. They received support for this from each other, their followers, and the Emperor, causing relatively little controversy. However, this and other arbitrary decisions of the First Curia provided ammunition for dissenting sects; some secretly maintain to this day that the whole hierarchy of the Ytarrian Church is based on deceit.

Lacking contact with Rome, the Ytarrian Church has no cardinals and no pope. The Curia is thus the highest governing body of the Church; it sets doctrine, formally appoints bishops, and attempts to guide rulers. As the greatest single landowner in Ytarria, it has tremendous political power.

Church politics, especially appointments, are a complex subject, however, with a *lot* of local variety. In the Empire, churchmen do *not* contradict the stated will of the Emperor if they know what's good for them; in Caithness and Cardiel, local bishops and secular rulers effectively possess final jurisdiction, even for selecting bishops and archbishops. If the Emperor tried to use the Curia to take such power for himself, he would risk undermining its authority and even breaking up the Church. The Caithness Schism, two centuries ago, taught the Empire its limits; it has accepted systematic compromises ever since.

Holy Orders

The priesthood is exclusively male but not exclusively human; any being considered to have a soul (p. 65) can be ordained, though some particularly conservative holy orders refuse to acknowledge this. Wise bishops keep their goblin priests and their Hospitallers well out of each other's paths. Nonhuman priests technically can rise as high in the hierarchy as anyone, but in fact, the Curia have never been anything but human. Women may become nuns and can rise to positions such as mother superior of a convent, but they cannot perform religious services.

All members of the clergy are bound to codes of chastity. Virtually all priests are literate. Holy folk dress in robes buttoned in front from neck to ankle. These may be of any color save red or green and range from the simple, rope-belted brown robe of a monk to a bishop's jeweled raiment. Nuns always wear veils.

The Rule of St. Benedict

The Ytarrian Church has many monastic orders, and all observe – with varying degrees of fidelity – the Benedictine Rule, laid down centuries before the Banestorm.

Monks and nuns living under Benedictine Rule must take the triple oath of chastity, poverty, and obedience. They may own no property save their habit or robes; they usually sleep on a mat on the floor. They may not speak during meals and must attend mass. All monks must serve in some useful capacity: by working in the monastery's fields and gardens, preparing food, constructing and repairing monastic buildings, and so forth. In addition, they must fulfill duties of prayer, Bible study, and

charitable work for the poor. Some monks and nuns are *cloistered* – totally isolated from the secular world. Their vows prohibit them from leaving the monastery grounds or speaking to anyone outside the order.

The Hospitallers

The Hospitallers are a monastic order of knights following the Benedictine Rule; their declared goal is Christian domination of Yrth. Though they do actually operate a hospital in New Jerusalem, their primary function is military.

The Order of the Hospital of St. John of Jerusalem arrived in Ytarria from Europe in 1187. On Earth, Grand Master Roger des Moulins and 11 Knights of the Order, the last survivors of a battle with the Saracens, were saved from death when a banestorm carried them to Yrth. Des Moulins interpreted this as divine aid and declared God had chosen them for a Crusade in this new world.

The Hospitallers founded New Jerusalem on the site of their arrival. Despite some initial feuding, common cause led to an alliance with Megalos, and the Empire and the Hospitallers fought together to spread Christianity to all of Ytarria. The Emperor rewarded their efforts with titles and land grants, and the Order went on to establish priories throughout Christendom. However, the Hospitallers have always maintained their independence from the Empire, answering only to their grand master and occasionally to the Curia.

The Hospitallers epitomize theological conservatism and intolerance. Church policy compels them to accept that goblins, halflings, reptile men, and other races may receive redemption, but they don't admit these "second-class Christians" into the Order. They regard dwarves and elves (who largely maintain their own religious beliefs) as the spawn of Satan. And, not surprisingly, Hospitallers despise Muslims. Hospitallers are required to strictly adhere to their vows except when campaigning, which may be why most are eager to march on the slightest pretext.

While the Order does not claim magic is inherently evil, it forbids its members to cast spells, holding that magic opens one to the temptations of evil. Thus, using magic is unwise for weak, mortal men. Hospitallers regard wizards as fools dabbling in something better left to God.

All across Ytarria, the Hospitallers' symbol of a white cross on a black field is known and feared. Because of their intolerant theology, the Cardien Prince expelled them from Cardiel in 1845. The Knights Templar inherited the vacated Hospitaller lands, fomenting a rivalry between the two orders which has only intensified with time. The Hospitallers also have little presence in Caithness. During the decades the Caithness Church was separate from Megalos', Hospitallers enthusiastically participated in Megalan attacks on any "heretics"; many Caithnessers still bear grudges over these events.

The Olybrians

The Holy Order of St. Michael Olybrius of Serrun is Yrth's largest monastic organization. Olybrius first carried Christianity to the Goblin Kingdoms; his success earned him the love of many goblin peasants but the enmity of their chieftains, who executed him in 1194. His example inspired others, and in 1199 they founded the order to further his work. Within 20 years, the goblins of the south were thoroughly Christian.

The Olybrians continue their evangelical tradition today. Wandering Olybrian friars, preaching the Gospel and aiding the poor, are a familiar sight throughout Christendom. In their great monasteries, theologians formulate arguments against heresy, abbots organize missions to distant lands, and monks work to keep peasants on the orthodox path. Olybrians implacably oppose heretics.

Father Jobert, Abbot of Evrow, currently leads them. He and other leading Olybrians are frustrated by the

The Order of Friedrich

"Friedrichites" are an unorthodox group of Christian friars. Their founder is known only as Brother Friedrich; the order is careful not to claim sainthood for him. Friedrich lived about 200 years ago and spent most of his life as a Franciscan (see p. 63), until his unusual theological ideas and radical forms of devotion led him to depart the main order. However, his followers still preserve many Franciscan principles, especially the vow of poverty, and dress in the same plain style. They do not form monasteries, but wander the world or become hermits. They live off alms from the faithful, who often are impressed by their dedication, or off their surroundings; many have high levels of Survival skill. Like the Franciscans, they are most commonly found in Caithness.

The group has no official status in the church, which occasionally investigates it on suspicion of heresy; Friedrichite teaching regards the material world as fundamentally tainted with evil, as did various older outcast sects. However, the Curia has never quite decided to condemn them, perhaps because Friedrichites have a curious if distant alliance with the Templars (p. 63). Friedrichites are often treated simply as Franciscans, to the Franciscans' embarrassment.

Friedrichites are defined by their disdain for the material world. However, they have developed a set of mystical, meditative disciplines which express their rejection of the material in very practical form. Friedrichites can also make terrifyingly convincing preachers; their purity of purpose and commanding presence can impress even unbelievers.

Friedrichites may not seem very suitable as adventurers, but they do not have an absolute commitment to pacifism, although they regard physical violence as another aspect of the corruption of the world. Members of this order also possess a fierce sense of morality. They do not get involved in quests for gold or glory, but they might well assist in a struggle against oppression or injustice – in their own way.

For character specifications and special advantages Friedrichites may possess, see *Mystic Lenses*, p. 213.

Megalan nobility's lack of crusading zeal. Together with the Hospitallers, Jobert is pressing for another assault on the Muslims.

Olybrians swear to follow the Benedictine Rule and to preach the Christian faith to any who cross their path. They need not be pacifists, especially where infidels and heretics are concerned. Many friars can wield their innocuous walking staves with deadly skill!

The Templars

In Paris in the summer of 1310, the Catholic Church burned 60 knights of the Templar order as witches. The Pope declared the entire "Order of the Poor Knights of Christ and the Temple of Solomon" heretical, and the Crown seized its lands and castles. The remaining knights had to either confess to heresy and renounce the order or go into hiding.

On Halloween of that year, in the middle of a furious storm, 60 knights in full armor rode up to the doors of the Abbey of St. Giles outside the walls of Megalos. They requested sanctuary, claiming to be knights who had taken monastic vows to defend Christendom and were fleeing persecution arising from false accusations.

The startled abbot admitted them. The Banestorm rarely manifested at that time, but it was clear they had just arrived from Earth. The abbot notified the Archbishop of Megalos, who sent Olybrian inquisitors to interview the newcomers. Although the knights were not entirely cooperative, the archbishop invited them to establish their order in his diocese, the Hospitallers having proved how effective such warriors could be.

Though the Templars claimed they knew nothing of magic, many of the original 60 became competent wizards within a year. Further, the new order almost immediately began accepting other races, at a time when many humans still considered them demons. The Earth-born Templars eventually dispersed, following "divine visions." At river crossings, important crossroads, and commanding hilltops, the knights founded houses of the order, and eventually built fortresses.

The Templars quickly became powerful through Church gifts of land. The archbishops of eastern Megalos were overjoyed at having their own military order to counter the Hospitaller influence in the west. They kept tight control of the Order, handpicking each Grand Master, who received a seat in the Curia, strengthening the eastern voting bloc. The Templars did not get the right to elect their own Grand Master until 1850, when the Hospitaller Grand Master and the archbishops of Caithness and Craine took issue with the eastern archbishops' continued manipulations. The current Grand Master is Sir Jordan Siegebreaker (p. 93), a human from the County of Sho'joor.

The Templars remain the primary military arm of the Church, as they are more willing to heed the Curia than the Hospitallers are. They accept warriors from all races, as long as they are fit to become knights and willing to take the vows. The Templars also value battle magic, and their college at Azer (p. 96) trains mages for both the Order and the Legions.

The Templars are strong throughout eastern Megalos and Cardiel, weaker west of the Blackwoods, and excluded from Caithness. They wear white habits with a red cross, symbolizing holiness and their willingness to become martyrs.

The Franciscans

The Order of Friars Minor were relative latecomers to Yrth, arriving in the 14th century. Their Order has downplayed preaching to focus obsessively on its traditions of poverty and mysticism. They show little interest in politics, either ecclesiastical or secular, but are content to serve God through manual labor. Friars are frequently illiterate and committed to absolute poverty.

In their search to escape worldly distractions, the followers of St. Francis have pioneered some of Yrth's most inhospitable territory. Many accompanied the original colonists of Caithness, and Franciscans remain numerous there.

The Secret of the Templars

There are many rumors about the original Yrthian Templars: they adapted to Yrth too easily, their skill with magic came too quickly, the spread of their order was too rapid. Their Halloween arrival seemed almost *orchestrated*. A few enemies of the Order whisper that the Templars are the only Earthlings who ever came to Yrth voluntarily, and that they might know how to get *back*.

The truth about the Templars' arrival and whether it was truly planned is left to the GM, but any truth of the matter should be a mystery and perhaps a surprise for PCs, even if they are Templars themselves. The full story is only known to the highest officers of the Order.

It's recommended that Templars *not* have reliable access to interdimensional magic, and they certainly shouldn't be able to return to Earth at will. That would be more power than the dark elves have after centuries of research. More to the point, if such spells exist, they will certainly be *used,* and the campaign will then transform into something different; see *Magical Inter-World Games,* p. 236.

One possible answer to the Templar enigma is that the original knights were not *completely* random Banestorm victims. They may have had some knowledge of real magic on Earth (or their version of Earth), and even learned enough about the Banestorm to locate an occasional manifestation. When the Templars found themselves facing destruction, some used this knowledge to escape. Thus, they were better prepared than most immigrants – though still very lucky.

If the GM adopts this story, it's likely that the Templars have been researching gate magic in secret ever since. They may have a policy of kidnapping interesting Banestorm victims and dark elf mages for interrogation, a practice which could backfire in interesting ways.

The Thomasites

The Order of St. Thomas (one of the 12 apostles) is dedicated to understanding the laws of the universe in the hopes of obtaining empirical proof of God. St. Gareth Aristophiles founded the order on Yrth in the late 1300s. He was a Benedictine abbot who devoted his life to studying the works of Aristotle, Pythagoras, Ptolemy, and other ancient Greek philosophers. His school, at Nordenbury near Hidelban, attracted scholars from all over Christendom, and the Order spread to most of the cities of Megalos. There are many Thomasite universities; those at Megalos and Calder rival the great Muslim institutions as storehouses of knowledge. However, some Thomasites prefer to wander the world, learning through observation and experience instead of studying ancient manuscripts.

From the start, the Order concentrated on the study of magic, a force obviously more prevalent on Yrth than Earth. Initially, Thomasites had to devote at least as much time to magic as to any other discipline. They soon recognized, however, the potential for evil in undisciplined research, and began reprimanding or expelling brothers who pursued arcane studies to the exclusion of religious matters. All Thomasites are required to take oaths not to use magic for evil, and the Order strongly encourages the study of ethics.

The flower of Thomasite research is their hospitals, specializing in magical healing. These institutions are located in Megalos, Teridar, Craine, and Calder. The Order turns no one away, but expects those who can to make an appropriate donation. There are few Thomasite healers – most brethren prefer research to doctoring – but those that exist are talented physicians and excellent instructors. Members of the Order administer the hospitals, but the staff include lay brethren and secular healers. Almost all forms of magical healing are available at Thomasite hospitals, but they will not attempt to resurrect the dead, considering such magic contrary to God's will.

The Order of St. Thomas accepts both men and women of all races. Thomasite abbeys are strictly segregated, but members have equal access to libraries and laboratories. There are even a few abbesses ruling convents.

Because of the extraordinary abilities and knowledge of its members, this Order is instrumental in formulating Church doctrine. Father Thales Sapientis, the current Grand Master, rarely takes an interest in Curia politics but is always deeply involved in any theological debate.

The Jesuits

Members of the Society of Jesus first came to Yrth during the 1570s, arriving in Araterre. The Church initially persecuted them, since their brand of monasticism was startlingly different from the Benedictine orders. However, their obvious zeal and successful missionary activity (not to mention oaths of loyalty to the Curia) eventually won them respect and favor.

Although they take vows of obedience, poverty, and chastity, Jesuit monks are not cloistered, and often go out into the world to perform God's work. Their philosophy calls for them to take the Church to the people, rather than bringing the people to the Church. A Jesuit's pulpit may be a crate in a busy town square or a fencepost in a village commons. Members of the Society are also known for their intellectual breadth and rigor. They can follow many professions in addition to monk, such as architect, diplomat, merchant, physician, teacher, or wizard. (All their earnings, of course, go to the Society.) There are Jesuit advisers in virtually every Megalan noble's court.

The Society of Jesus sometimes meddles in politics. Its influence is such that others frequently accuse it of conspiracy . . . often correctly. Some even claim that the Society uses

The Michaelites

A group of priests and knights founded the Order of the Archangel Michael in 1412 as a secular "auxiliary order" to guide an inquisition against nonbelievers in Megalos. The Michaelites handled solely religious crimes for 200 years, until heretics became scarce in the Empire. They then took on duties similar to Earth police, investigating political affairs and spectacular or magical crimes. Their investigative methods are sophisticated enough to counter clever and sorcerous criminals.

Medieval Earth had no equivalent to the Michaelites, and on Yrth they are neither city guardsmen nor knights. There are separate Michaelite organizations in each of the Christian lands. They cooperate, but share no leadership.

Megalan Michaelites, the direct successors of the original Order, are fanatical, exclusively male, and effectively under the admittedly loose control of the Emperor, despite their religious trappings.

The Michaelites of Caithness are skilled investigators and good "street cops," often of common birth, and report formally to the archbishop but work closely with secular authorities.

Cardien Michaelites are purely policemen, with no connection to the church; some are Muslim, and all report to the Prince. All are supported by holdings granted to the Order and stipends from crown or church. For Michaelites in Caithness and Cardiel, the better kind of American FBI agent is a good model. In Megalos, a Spanish inquisitor is a closer analogy.

Michaelites work in teams of around five, called Fists of Michael in Megalos, and Hands of Michael in Caithness and Cardiel. In Megalos, one member will always be a priest. In Cardiel, there may be a mullah. Except in low-mana Caithness, there will always be a wizard in the group as well. The Caithness order doesn't have as many wizards as it has Hands, and is always interested in recruiting more.

Michaelites wear a blue surcoat with a white shield device. In Megalos and Caithness, the shield is quartered by a blue cross.

assassination to achieve its goals. It is sometimes unclear what Yrthian Jesuits gain from their political maneuvering, but it is apparent they have an agenda known only to themselves.

Jesuit mages are particularly mysterious. They often have unusual or even unique powers, the secrets of which they never reveal. Many of these seem to come from magical devices of unknown origin. This has led to deep and justifiable suspicion among secular mages.

The Constantinians

St. Constantine was a 16th-century monk in charge of the Imperial Archives of Megalos. He wrote on logic, philosophy, and ontology, and is best known for his book *The Organization of Daily Life,* a primer on the philosophies and practicalities of management and administration. In his later years, he built a small monastery on the outskirts of the capital with the emperor's support. This became the nucleus of the small Constantinian Order, whose members play key roles in the administration of Church and Empire.

The Afterlife

Most human religions on Yrth posit some kind of afterlife, separate from the mundane world, where the souls of the dead reside. The disposition of dead souls is the province of the divine, and the living do not get to interfere in the matter.

This means those magic spells which apparently manipulate the dead (e.g., Summon Spirit, Soul Jar, and Resurrection) are controversial. The Church classifies them as black magic and also holds that these spells do not, in fact, affect souls. A good Christian believes that the entity summoned by a Summon Spirit spell is at best a kind of "echo" of the deceased, and at worst a deceitful demon. Further, anyone brought back to life by secular magic, as opposed to a genuine divine miracle, is treated as a kind of undead.

A few theologians hold that Resurrection spells are legitimate – if they work, the soul has evidently *not* truly passed on, and hence such invocations are no more than an extreme form of healing; if they don't do anything, the subject was truly dead. This is hotly debated, but mostly as a point of theory; the spells in question are, after all, little known and hard to cast. The main branches of Islam and Judaism believe similarly, though there are sects of all three religions with divergent views.

The religions of the Elder Folk have very different attitudes. Most dwarves, elves, and orcs believe that necromantic magic does exactly what it appears to do. In their belief systems, a person's soul doesn't "go" anywhere after death but rather merges with the world at large. Summon Spirit and related spells cause a person's essence to re-coalesce, temporarily or permanently. It's possible that both points of view are right . . . or that something far more complicated is going on.

Islam

The lands of southwestern Ytarria are the home of the followers of Islam. Their faith is straightforward yet all-encompassing; one need only proclaim, "There is no God but Allah, and Muhammad is His Prophet," to be accepted as a Muslim. The Muslims have reconstructed the great urban and mercantile culture which they remember from medieval Earth, and stand proudly in this new world.

History

Islam appeared on Earth at the beginning of the 7th century A.D., propounded by the Prophet Muhammad in the Arabian city of Mecca. It exploded as a faith and political power across North Africa and the Middle East as far as China, India, and Spain, eventually confronting Christian Europe and other rivals as its own major religion. But the Muslim lands eventually split into a number of states, dividing their significant power, and consequently suffered setbacks: invaders from Central Asia overthrew many Arab rulers . . . only to convert to Islam themselves. The Banestorm struck when Islam was first facing Christian crusaders from Europe.

Arrival on Yrth

While the Banestorm was as startling for Muslims as for anyone else, the faith adapted quickly. After all, the Koran itself points out that God could recreate the world any time He wished; His will is mysterious, but He had not placed the faithful in an intolerable position.

The Muslims deposited on Yrth, mostly Arabs and North Africans with a few Persians, found themselves in a wide, empty country of rolling, arid plains and winding rivers. Some adopted the nomadic lifestyle of their Bedouin and Berber forebears, wandering, fighting, and herding. At oases and riversides where they gathered to trade, towns sprang up, providing refuges for doctors, artists, poets, mullahs (teachers and scholars of the sacred law) and holy men. A dual culture grew up, part nomadic, part urbanized, but united by faith. Encounters with nonhumans and functioning magic were startling, but magic was covered by the law, although early bad experiences made some Muslims nervous about it. Nonhumans could be compared with the djinn of legend; some members of these other races even converted to Islam.

The faithful did not immediately attempt to recreate the great Muslim nations of Earth. During this period, the two major branches of Islam, Sunni and Shi'ite (p. 69), lived in relative harmony. The mullahs argued theology, but nomads and peasants were more concerned with their feuds over territory and goat thefts.

The New Holy City

In the year 1160 – 555 of the lunar-based Islamic calendar – wandering tribesmen, deep in the mountain range called the Fence of God, discovered a great valley. They came upon a great black rock jutting up from the valley floor, with passages from the Koran carved upon its surface. Upon it sat an ancient man. He greeted them in Arabic, saying he had been waiting for 60 years to show the Muslims of Yrth where to build their holy city. Awed by a sense of holiness, the tribesmen left, promising to return with as many mullahs as they could gather.

When they returned several months later, the old man was dead – yet his corpse had decayed not at all, and was untouched by scavengers. The mullahs pronounced this a sign and founded the hidden city of Geb'al-Din (see p. 126) upon the spot. It soon came to stand in place of Mecca for the Muslims of Yrth. But Ytarrian Muslims remained, mostly, scattered and disunited. It took a shock from outside to change everything.

The Wars

The Grand Crusade of 1440, a Megalan invasion, surprised the Muslims with its surprise and ferocity. Still, they responded quickly, and by 1450 the scattered sheikhdoms had coalesced into nations. First was al-Haz, with a Shi'ite holy man as Sultan and Chief Imam, claiming to be the supreme leader of Muslims on Yrth. A few years later, Sunni tribesmen to the north founded al-Wazif, naming their most able chief as Caliph – the political and spiritual leader of Islam. The scattered Sunni tribes of the southeast founded al-Kard shortly afterwards, under a Sultan who gave merely nominal allegiance to the Caliph. Only the threat of a common foe and the spirit of Islamic brotherhood prevented war between the factions.

This alliance did not last long. Megalos eventually focused its attentions on al-Kard as the weakest opponent, and al-Wazif took the opportunity to try taking control of Geb'al-Din from the Shi'ites of al-Haz. A 20-year series of four-sided wars ensued, during which al-Kard fell to Christian armies. Faced with the growing Megalan threat, the two surviving Muslim nations concluded a truce assuring Sunni access to the Holy City, which holds to this day. Since then, conflicts with Megalos have come and gone, and what was al-Kard has become the independent, religiously diverse nation of Cardiel. Although the situation appears to have reached a kind of equilibrium, the Frontier Wars (p. 16) showed how fragile this state of affairs is.

The Faith

Islam is based on the word of God as revealed in the Koran as well as on the *hadiths*, the reported sayings and deeds of the Prophet Muhammad. The Arabic word *Islam* means "submission"; the Prophet preached this reverence of God in all things. For the Muslim, religion is more than a matter of spiritual fulfillment; it is a way of life.

The Koran is the Muslim's primary behavior guide. It is not considered the work of a mortal author, but the direct word of God. Every syllable is divine – Muhammad was merely the instrument through which God made His will known. It is the final word of God; any further "revelations" are automatically false. Translations are flawed by definition; the only proper way to study the Koran is in Arabic.

Idolatry of any kind is strictly forbidden. It is a sin to associate anything with God or to create a representation of Him. Even depictions of the human form are traditionally considered improper, since man was made in God's image. For this reason, most Islamic art is abstract in nature. Calligraphy, however, is very refined. Often, great works of calligraphy consist of verses from the Koran worked into geometrical forms and patterns.

There is no separation of church and state in Islam; the highest religious authority among men theoretically rests with the ruler – the Caliph for al-Wazif and Cardiel, the Sultan for al-Haz. The crescent is the faith's traditional symbol, often used to mark out mosques. No specific attire is required for the scholarly Ulama (p. 67), though black robes are common.

The Five Pillars

The core of the Faith are the basic duties known as the Five Pillars of Islam. The first of these, *Shahada*, is the profession of faith in Allah and His Prophet. One need only utter this short prayer, and believe it, to be a Muslim.

Salat, the second pillar, is worship. Muslims pray five times daily, at dawn, midday, mid-afternoon, sunset and nightfall. They face the *qibla*, the direction of Geb'al-Din, and repeatedly prostrate themselves from a standing position. (On Earth, the *qibla* is in the direction of Mecca.) One may pray anywhere, but a mosque (p. 67) is preferred. Travelers typically carry special rugs on which to pray. Muslims almost always attend a mosque at midday on Fridays. Imams, scholars of the Koran, deliver sermons and lead the congregation in prayer, though imams are not required for valid worship. Muslims always wash ritually before praying.

Charity, or *Zakat*, is the third pillar. All Muslims are expected to give to the needy, especially to orphans, widows and pilgrims. At least 5% of a person's income is normal.

The fourth pillar is *Sawm*, the fast. For the entire lunar month of Ramadan, no Muslim should eat or drink anything other than water while the sun shines. Pregnant women, the old, the sick, and travelers are exempt. The end of Ramadan is marked by a great feast.

The fifth and final pillar is the *Hajj*, or pilgrimage. At least once in every Muslim's life, he should make this

holy journey, partly in honor of Muhammad's Farewell Pilgrimage, the Prophet's final journey to Mecca before he died. However, the crux of the Hajj is to rekindle one's humility, to cast off the self-centered trivia of daily life and rejoice in the community of Islam under Allah.

Mecca, by the will of Allah, not being reachable, Yrthian Muslims now travel to Geb'al-Din. Thousands make the journey every year; the poor among them beg alms along the way. Great pilgrim caravans, protected by treaty and sanctity of purpose, are a common sight along the roads to the Hidden City. The slow, steady growth of these groups as they progress toward the black Koranic stone, center of Islam on Yrth, in part represents the journey from within to without, from self to other to all.

Destiny and Free Will

Islam declares that every event, from the beginning of time to the end of the world, is predetermined by God. It also states that each person has free will and bears responsibility for his actions. God gave men the power of choice, and the ability to distinguish between good and evil. Being omniscient, He knows what choice each individual will make, without influencing the person either way.

Hence, some Muslims are fatalistic, holding that the times of their deaths are not theirs to control – which can make them formidably brave in battle. On the other hand, popular stories in Muslim lands are full of heroes who find great treasures or suffer great disasters in seemingly arbitrary ways; such is destiny. The only catastrophe would be if they despaired of God. Nonetheless, a Muslim will, for example, consult a doctor or take medicine if he is sick; it may be his destiny to be cured.

The Umma and the Ulama

Muslims have a strong sense of their religion as a unified whole, and may feel loyalty to the *umma*, the community of believers, above all else. This community is entirely voluntary; the Koran explicitly states that no man should be forced to convert to Islam.

The faith has no formal clerical hierarchy – the services of a priest are not required for a person to be a good Muslim – but the *Ulama*, the class of religious scholars, are greatly respected as guides to correct understanding. Religious leadership is thus conferred by the consensus of the community, not through formal ordination, although qualifications from a religious school or university almost guarantee acceptance. Any man accepted as knowledgeable in the faith and of good character may become an imam. In game terms, this is treated as Clerical Investment with no Religious Rank; most imams are Status 1.

Greater seniority in the Ulama comes from greater learning and acknowledged wisdom. A mullah usually acts as a teacher, and perhaps as a community leader or a judge; such respected figures may have Status 2-5. General agreement among the Ulama is required to accomplish a significant change in doctrine or interpretation.

Mosques

A mosque is a building dedicated to Muslim prayer, sometimes with a school attached. Important features usually include facilities for the faithful to wash their hands and feet before entering the main part of the building, a procedure generally seen as a central feature of the faith – especially as the faithful prostrate themselves to pray, so, pragmatically, clean floors are essential. Also present is a large open prayer hall, with a pulpit and niche indicating the *qibla*. The call to prayer is issued by *muezzins* from tall minarets attached to mosques or from the doorways of smaller places of worship. In Sunni cities, magic is sometimes used to louden the call; visiting Shi'ites find this distasteful at best, blasphemous at worst.

The presence of the opposite sex is considered a distraction during prayer, and so women often pray at home – but many larger mosques have two separate prayer halls, one for each gender.

The Shari'a

The Shari'a is the Islamic legal code. It consists of rules drawn from the Koran and the hadiths, as interpreted over the centuries, supplemented, usually on specific local matters, by edicts from Muslim rulers. There is no separate secular code; the Shari'a regulates religious, social, political and private life.

On Yrth, all cases are heard before religious courts, overseen by a full-time judge known as a *cadi*, or in smaller towns, by a mullah. Laws are generally interpreted fairly, and many cadis are high-minded religious thinkers who cannot be tempted by bribes or influenced by social status. However, low-status Muslims make jokes about cadis, not *all* of whom are as saintly as they wish to appear. Christians and Jews – the "peoples of the book" protected under long-standing tradition – have at least basic rights under the Shari'a, although they may have difficulty claiming them in intolerant regions.

Julnari Dervishes

This Sufi order was founded around 1750 by the poet, musician, and scholar Julnar ibn-Daud abd-al-Malik ath-Thamadi. They are often known as the "Chanting Dervishes," although they are not the only dervishes to use chanting and singing as a meditative system, and also as "the Truth-Tellers." They are committed to perceiving the universe as it truly is, holding that, when everything is understood without deception, the path to God becomes clear.

They use an extremely intricate system of solitary and communal chants and songs, partly formulaic and partly improvised, to focus their minds. In the process, some gain an uncanny ability to perceive facts which are hidden to others. These abilities make Julnaris very useful to the powerful; however, such guides require an absolute commitment to the ideal of truth.

For more on designing Julnari characters, see *Mystic Lenses*, p. 213.

As in medieval European law, punishments are generally of the "eye for an eye" type; thieves only have their hands cut off if they steal fairly large amounts. Usury, defined as charging *any* interest on loans, is both a sin and illegal; merchants seek out business partners, not bankers. The Shari'a is actually designed to prevent blood feuds and excessive punishments, with much allowance for payments of compensation and encouragement of forgiveness, though this doesn't always work. It also has quite strict rules of evidence; conviction for many crimes requires multiple eyewitnesses.

Islam has no specific prohibition against magic, but its use for evil has traditionally been severely punished, and idolatry, let alone consorting with demonic beings, is absolutely prohibited.

Food and Drink

Islam includes a set of dietary rules, known as *halal*, somewhat similar to the Jewish kosher (p. 75), notably prohibiting pork. It also prohibits alcohol and other intoxicants. In al-Haz, this law is enforced rigorously. Alcohol is tolerated in al-Wazif as a custom of the Christian minority, and lax Muslims often have wine at home, but it is frowned upon, and public drunkenness is a serious crime. In both countries, violators are flogged.

Family Law

In Islam, marriage takes the form of a contract between husband and wife. The groom negotiates the contract with the bride's guardian, usually her father or oldest brother. A bride-price must be specified in the contract, and is paid directly to the bride. The groom receives no dowry. The bride has the right to refuse a match her guardian has made for her, but may not marry without his permission unless she has been previously married.

The Koran allows a man to have up to four wives at one time, but he must treat them all equally; a woman may only have one husband at a time. The legality of concubines is actually questionable, but very wealthy men sometimes have large harems.

A man may divorce his wife at any time, provided that she is not pregnant, by simply declaring that they are divorced, in public, three times; he need not give a reason. However, his wife then keeps the bride-price. Women may obtain a divorce, with the husband's consent, by paying a fee to him. They may also be granted divorces by a cadi if their husbands are guilty of cruelty, adultery, or desertion.

Adulterers can be punished with death by stoning; fornicators with flogging. However, by strict interpretations of the law, a conviction may require multiple eyewitnesses to the crime, and false accusations of any crime are punished severely.

Two-thirds of a dead man's estate is distributed among his relatives; the remaining third may be divided any way the deceased wished. A complex system determines the shares received by wives, children, and blood relations; basically, the size of the share is determined by the degree of kinship.

Slavery

Islam sees slavery not as a *good* thing, but as perhaps an unavoidable thing. Muslims may own slaves, but it is a virtuous act to free them. However, it is illegal to free a slave who has no skills or other honest way to support himself! Slaves are protected from abuse by strong customs. See pp. 42-43 for more on this.

Free Muslims cannot be enslaved, even in war. Slaves don't automatically gain their freedom by converting, but often receive it eventually, at least in their owner's will. Hence, the system depends on a steady supply of new slaves from beyond the borders of Islam.

Another law prohibits castration of human beings. As wealthy Muslims acquired the idea of the harem, complete with eunuch guards, slavers sought victims for this purpose when raiding far beyond known lands, where the law could be effectively disregarded. In practice, there are few eunuch guards found outside the harems of the *very* wealthy and powerful, and many of them are orcs or ogres – who, not being human, are arguably not covered by the law.

Heresy

Many Muslims would argue their faith has no concept of "heresy" as Christians understand it. They can hardly deny that it has its divisions – primarily that between Sunni and Shia (the collective term for Shi'ites) – but neither of those groups would say that the others were not true Muslims. This, they say, is a difference between them and the divided, confused Christians.

Muslim Oaths

Muslims take oaths very seriously, despite a common tendency to make vows with little provocation. Sometimes, for example, a man may declare that, if he breaks his word, his wives will be divorced and his slaves freed – and this is considered fully binding.

However, swearing "by Allah" is considered simply emphatic, not blasphemous.

Moreover, there is no parallel word or even concept for "atheist" in Muhammad's faith; to Muslims, "unbelievers" recognize God's presence and that all roads lead to Him, but they refuse to acknowledge this or give thanks for His bounty. Yet the Koran teaches that all prophets, Muslim or otherwise, bring greater wisdom of God to humanity, so this should not be interpreted to mean those of Islam are intolerant. They refuse to condemn any other faith, viewing them as different roads to truth. They also will not force anyone to convert to their belief. Granted, religious idealism often clashes with bloody reality, as Islam's history and current inner conflicts attest.

Islam's Divisions

Long before the Banestorm, Islam had been divided into two groups, the Sunnis and the Shi'ites, and members of both groups found themselves on Yrth. The original division was caused by a dispute over succession after the death of Muhammad; the minority Shi'ites supported the claims of Muhammad's cousin 'Ali, while the majority Sunnis supported Abu Bakr, who became the first Caliph on Earth. After a series of negotiations, the assassination of 'Ali, and other deaths, the division became ingrained. Shi'ites held that the right to rule was hereditary in 'Ali's family, while Sunnis adopted the more pragmatic idea that a leader could be selected by the consensus of the community.

Over time, the two groups developed other differences. However, much of this is forgotten by or irrelevant to all but the most educated of the faithful on Yrth.

Today, nationalistic rivalry aside, the main practical point of contention is magic. Islam has no specific prohibition against magic, but its use for evil has traditionally been severely punished, and idolatry, let alone consorting with demonic beings, is absolutely prohibited. This led to a strong sense of disapproval towards magic among some Yrth Muslims. However, its usefulness in war and peace was too clear to ignore.

Human Religions' Views of Nonhumans

Some of the religions which humanity brought to Yrth were well-accustomed to promoting themselves. Furthermore, they eventually became the beliefs of the dominant race on Ytarria. Quite soon, they began to spread to nonhuman races.

This represented a complex problem for theologians, some of whom refused to accept that nonhumans had souls, let alone that they could convert. However, most concluded that outward form was less important than inner nature, and that nonhuman belief could be sincere and should not be denied. Islam in particular remembered that the Koran itself spoke of *djinn*, spirits of smokeless fire, created by God, who could become devout Muslims, so creatures with lesser differences to humanity than *that* could hardly be turned away. However, not all Muslims are tolerant enough to reach out to nonhumans.

Christianity had more theoretical trouble – the Bible had little to say that seemed relevant – but eventually, theologians determined that nonhumans were either descendants of the "giants" hinted at in some texts, much-changed children of Adam, or outcasts from a different Eden. Whatever the truth – and intellectual debate continues – it would be wrong (and impolitic) to ignore even the possibility of saving a soul. Halfling and goblin citizens of Megalos serve as good examples of Christian nonhumans.

Judaism regards this as a matter of abstract debate rather than doctrine. The religion never sought converts, but politely suggested to non-Jews that they should follow some basic moral rules which might be found in other faiths. Occasionally, some curious nonhuman studies Judaism and seeks to convert; many rabbis actually try, very delicately, to discourage this, to avoid annoying local Christians or Muslims, but rarely some believer will be quietly accepted into a synagogue after careful assessment of how Jewish laws and requirements might be applied.

Pagans vary widely in their treatment of nonhumans; most are welcoming, some actually *worshipful*, but others are violently hostile.

Sunnis

The pragmatic, consensual Sunnis had little difficulty in resolving this issue. Misuse of magic could be punished like any other crime, and otherwise, a wizard could be a good Muslim. Hence, magic is quite common in al-Wazif. Indeed, some Sunni theologians study it, viewing this as part of the holy pursuit of understanding, which Muhammad specifically encouraged.

The chief limit on Wazifi wizards is that they are required to declare themselves on completing their course of basic studies, and then serve the Caliph's government for two years, often in the army. Anyone found practicing magic who cannot prove that they have done so will face a tricky interrogation by a panel of mullahs and wizards, and suspicions of possibly diabolical activities – followed by a two-year stint in the army if they are judged merely careless or lazy. Female spellcasters worry the socially conventional, but are generally tolerated; they may serve the government for their two years from within the domestic staff of rulers or administrators, or be excused full-time duty in exchange for a longer period of occasional service to the government. Visiting foreign wizards are tolerated, but seen as, simply, foreigners with too much power; they are closely watched, and prosecuted if their activities ever include any sort of misdemeanor.

Wazifi magicians are much concerned over the rising animosity towards magic in al-Haz, fearing that someday they will be forbidden access to Geb'al-Din.

Shi'ites

Shi'ite Islam is based, as much as anything, on opposition to the consensual majority, and faith in the wisdom of the heirs of 'Ali. Hence, it provided a spiritual home for many who doubted the morality of magic when they first saw it on Yrth – especially as none of the claimants to Shi'ite leadership status who appeared in those days had any magical talent. Magic looked dangerous and morally dubious to these people.

This suspicion hardened into active hostility over the years. Although magic isn't illegal in al-Haz, it *is* closely monitored. It is generally accepted that Allah will forgive wizards who work for the good of Islam, but, most Shi'ites believe, use of spells for any other purpose will lead the sorcerer to damnation.

Some mullahs want to outlaw magic entirely. As the Megalan threat declined over the years, their numbers grew; the Frontier Wars (p. 16) caused some uncertainty, but when the legionary advance was halted, the sense of threat receded, replaced by a sense that magic was a tool of the infidel. The radicals are still a minority; in regions under their control, however, any display of arcane power is likely to attract swift, painful responses.

Sufis

Sufis are Muslims of a mystical bent; full-time Sufi mystics are known as *dervishes*. (The word "Sufi" may be derived from *suf*, a coarse woolen shirt worn by many dervishes.) Their ultimate goal is spiritual union with the universe as the manifestation of God. Sufis achieve this through spiritual ecstasy brought on by chanting, fasting, harsh discipline, and intense meditation. Some (the "whirling dervishes") use a rigorous dance.

There are several dervish orders on Yrth, usually organized around a spiritual leader. They often build "monasteries" in remote regions, where they may concentrate on the divine. Unlike Christian monks, however, Sufis do not take vows. They may sometimes have wives and children, own property, and pursue ordinary occupations. Sufis do tend to the unconventional, which is one reason why they accept a few female dervishes.

Because Sufi leaders are thought to commune with God, their utterances are often regarded as holy. Upon a particularly holy Sufi's death, he (or *she*) becomes a saint, his grave a pilgrimage site.

Very orthodox Muslims sometimes regard Sufis as dangerous eccentrics or idolaters, especially as some dervishes are relatively casual in their obedience to sacred laws. Sufi orders' attitudes to magic vary widely, but are more often favorable than hostile; Sufis are traditionally tolerant, within broad limits.

The Ghazi Orders

The Muslim and Christian lands of Yrth have been in contact for far longer than their medieval progenitors, and inevitably some ideas have cross-fertilized. One such concept is the idea of warrior "orders."

Certainly, Islam always had its "ghazis" – warriors sworn to fight for the faith – but the ghazis of Yrth have created formal groups which face the Christian knightly orders on very similar terms. Indeed, many Anglish-speakers refer to them as "knights" and even acknowledge that they meet the ideals of knighthood pretty well, for unbelievers. Warriors belonging to any of these orders have a +2 Reputation in Islamic lands – and a +1 in Christian lands.

The Ghazis of the Crescent Moon

Some of the best warriors in al-Haz belong to this order. They are pledged to the defense of Islam, though they don't swear homage to the Sultan; the words of the Ulama carry greater weight with them.

The Ghazis of the Pegasus

The Order of the Pegasus, the chief Wazifi "chivalric" order, is pledged to the Caliph. They are ready to serve him at any moment and form the elite core of his army. The most honored Ghazis of the Pegasus also act as the

Nonhumans' Views of Human Religions

While elves and dwarves have their own religions or sets of beliefs (see p. 81) which appeal to them strongly, making conversions to human faiths quite rare, some of the other races seem notably inclined to accept human beliefs. The halflings, settled among larger human communities all across Yrth, accepted human beliefs with apparently complete sincerity; most are Christians, and some have risen in the priesthood. The goblins, equally adaptable and fascinated by novelty, similarly tend to emulate the faith of their more numerous human neighbors, although many churchmen have a suspicion that they would convert to other faiths on a whim, if it were safe and interesting. If anyone says as much, goblins deny this with great shows of unhappiness. Their hobgoblin cousins show little interest in religion but go along with what seem like good deals.

Those reptile men who choose to live among humanity must be "more human than humans" to be accepted. These rare individuals often make extraordinarily devout converts.

Finally, orcs and their ilk seem fundamentally unable to accept human religious ideas. There are some genuine exceptions, and some who simply misunderstand the nature of the business, but the clash of temperament and instinct is usually simply too strong. The orcish idea of honor, which tends to involve destroying or despoiling lots of property, doesn't help. While priests and mullahs both deny that the devil could create a living race, there is a certain unavoidable tendency to wonder if orcs are inherently diabolical.

Caliph's bodyguard. Being Sunnis, and more active in the wars against Megalos due to the two powers' shared border, the Pegasi have little use for the Crescent Moon. The rivalry between the two occasionally turns violent.

The Warriors of the Quill

The Warriors of the Quill are a religious order spread throughout Muslim lands. They would agree that "the pen is mightier than the sword," although they are also skilled in combat. They are expected to memorize the Koran and other Islamic works word for word. Their primary role is to preach, to teach, and to judge. It isn't sufficient for them merely to *say* what is right or wrong; they must *act* to promote Allah's will. They include everything from thoughtful and devout warriors to bookish but energetic teachers.

Muslim Radicals and "Heretics"

Some groups, starting out as Muslims, have developed beliefs and practices so heterodox as to make them widely despised and sometimes persecuted – if one recognizes *most* of God's reality but denies the rest, that makes any following blasphemy worse. Still, these cults include some fanatics who regard themselves as willing martyrs for truth.

Yrthian Kharijites

The Kharijites of Earth arose out of the same political conflicts as the Sunni-Shi'ite division. Originally allied with 'Ali, they rebelled when he accepted adjudication in the dispute; judgment, they declared, belonged to God alone. So they murdered 'Ali, and declared that *jihad* – struggle, and for them, specifically, holy war – was the sixth pillar of Islam.

Ruthlessly moralistic and puritanical, they were a persistent source of trouble for early Muslim states until they were more or less wiped out. However, some apparently survived – or at least their ideas remained interesting to some Muslims. In the chaos of humanity's arrival on Yrth, the Kharijite name was resurrected.

Today, Ytarrian Kharijites are generally seen as an order of holy warriors, although there *are* noncombatant Kharijite believers. They are most common in al-Wazif, where they have a number of powerful fortresses; al-Haz regards them with deep suspicion for claiming association with the murderers of 'Ali. Kharijites are bitterly opposed to the Hospitallers, whose strongholds lie just across the border; the Frontier Wars saw many clashes in which any "chivalrous" rules of warfare were completely abandoned, and the Kharijites ache for another fight.

So far, their leaders have managed to refrain from accusing the Caliph of cowardice or blasphemy for agreeing a truce.

For his part, the Caliph sees the Kharijites as useful – so long as they can be kept on the border. If Kharijites raiding Megalan territory are caught and hung as bandits, he makes no protest; if they survive and return with useful intelligence, his generals are grateful.

Kharijites don't object to magic, but they do not use it much. Any Kharijite who does train as a wizard chafes if his two-year service to the Caliph is peaceful, demanding to be sent against the infidel.

In game terms, sincere Kharijites have *both* Fanaticism (sometimes Extreme Fanaticism) and Intolerance (directed at either Christians or *all* non-Kharijites). The group has a Reputation (+3 from fanatical Sunnis, +1 from merely dedicated Sunnis, -2 from devout Shi'ites, -3 from Christians who know of their past behavior), and usually demands a Duty of members. It can also act as a Patron (treated as a powerful organization).

The Hashishin

The Isma'ilis were a radical Shi'ite splinter sect which arose on Earth in the eighth century. They formed a secret revolutionary society, given to finding hidden meanings in the Koran. In 1090, a Persian-based group broke away from the main body, and began a program of subverting and taking over remote mountain fortresses and – most famously – assassinating its enemies. They became known to outsiders as the *Hashishin*.

The group's fortresses on Earth were eventually destroyed, leaving only a peaceful Isma'ili sect. However, some Hashishin had been caught up by the Banestorm and brought to Yrth, where they preserve their sinister traditions.

Some of the more senior proclaimed themselves leaders, claiming that they had a special, secret understanding of the truth – of the Banestorm, why it had brought them here, and anything else that drew converts. As the sect had always claimed there were many layers of secret doctrine accessible only to the "illuminated" hierarchy, their followers accepted this. They drew members from the confused and desperate and began building fortresses in the mountains. They preserved secrecy as to their true nature for years; only gradually did the mainstream Muslim community realize the old menace had returned, and some Hashishin communities remain unidentified even today. Of course, the sect's talent for subversion and secret proselytizing helps.

Their main headquarters, high in the mountains of western al-Haz, is named Al-Amut, "The Eagle's Nest," after their similar base on Earth; concealed by total secrecy and countless spells, it remains completely unknown to outsiders. Their leader, known only as the Old Man of the Mountains, dwells there and never leaves, but determines their policy and – his followers believe – communes with God.

"Hashishin" actually means "users of hashish" – or, more colloquially, "thugs and ruffians." The Yrth drug which bears the name "hashish" is different from that of Earth, but produces the same euphoric effect. Its trade is banned in Islamic Yrth but continues quietly regardless, making the name more appropriate than is immediately evident. "Hashishin" is the source of the English word "assassin." Members of the group simply call themselves "true believers" or something similar. Their enemies often think the Hashishin must indeed be drugged to pursue their suicidal missions, but the plain fact is they are religious fanatics who devoutly believe that death in service of their faith guarantees them entrance to Paradise.

Virtually every city in Islamic lands (and, some say, beyond) harbors secret Hashishin cults. Their theoretical goal is to spread their faith all across Yrth, but this is a remote prospect. They see themselves as pursuing a great, lengthy quest by slow stages – most of which involve eliminating those who impede their progress. However, their leadership often shows subtlety in its choice of targets, eliminating rulers whose policies would threaten the Hashishin in the long term. They try to spread chaos as well as fear.

In theory, Hashishin communities are religious foundations which pursue a kind of theological communism, holding all property in common. In practice, they are a rigid theocratic hierarchy, in which higher ranks claim higher levels of enlightenment. Ordinary members, known as *fedayin*, "self-sacrificers," are required to serve, kill, and die, without question. Candidates for the higher ranks are selected for intelligence and the right combination of dedication and malleability, and are carefully mentally conditioned as they advance. Some receive training in magic.

Hashishin Assassination

Yrth has assassins of every stripe, from back-alley murderers to refined courtly poisoners and the fearsomely professional Assassins' Guild of Tredroy (p. 147). However, the most feared group of all is the cult which gave its name to the act of political murder. *Hashishin* are terrifying because they are so demonstrably willing to die as well as to kill for their beliefs. This terror suits them very well; indeed, it is as much the point of their assassinations as the deaths of specific foes.

Hashishin assassins are trained in disguise, stealth, and basic knife combat. Typically, working alone or in twos or threes, they get close to their target, then draw concealed blades and attack, aiming to land killing blows before bodyguards or bystanders can intervene and cut them down. They have no compunction about, say, attacking a victim at Friday prayers, as they regard the rituals of mainstream Islam as hollow mockeries.

The Hashishin have also acquired some knowledge of magic. A senior initiate mage may operate in support of a mission, but will typically be miles away when the killers actually strike.

Hashishin Characters: All Hashishin have Extreme Fanaticism and a Duty, which for some fedayin is Extremely Hazardous – although many are left in place for years, spying and establishing themselves in society, before they strike (and hence have a large and dangerous Secret). Those who advance through the hierarchy can gain levels of Rank in the cult. The sect may represent a Patron, although it generally only grants aid that is directly appropriate to a mission.

In twisted campaigns, Hashishin leaders may *actually* possess superhuman insights, and hence the Illuminated advantage.

Balikites

Balikites are followers of Balik Abdallah al-Firuz, a fanatical Shi'ite mullah from northwestern al-Haz who preaches that magic is an abomination. Balik has declared a jihad against practitioners of magic everywhere; all magicians, he says, are evil, and must be slain. Muslims killed while trying to slay a mage are martyrs, earning instant admission to

Paradise. This belief makes Balikites totally fearless.

Wizards throughout al-Haz have fallen prey to Balikite gangs. Balik himself has been condemned, somewhat half-heartedly, by the Shi'ite mullahs; the Sultan, however, hates the Balikites with a passion. One of his most trusted advisors was once dragged from his bed and flogged to death because he was merely *rumored* to be a mage, and wizards grow ever more unwilling to serve the state. The Sultan has offered a fortune in gold to any man who brings him Balik's head. Balikites have also struck in al-Wazif, where, if caught, they are publicly tortured to death. Mages in Islamic lands have taken to hiring bodyguards, and imagine Balikites lurking in every shadow.

The Balikites might appear to have something in common with the Hashishin, and their tactics are certainly similar. However, the two groups nurture mutual contempt as only two sets of fanatics can. The Balikites know that the Hashishin employ magic, while the Hashishin note that the Balikites are ultra-conventional in most of their theology, and hence utterly opposed to Isma'ili doctrine. The only thing keeping the two groups from each others' throats is that both have bigger targets.

Judaism

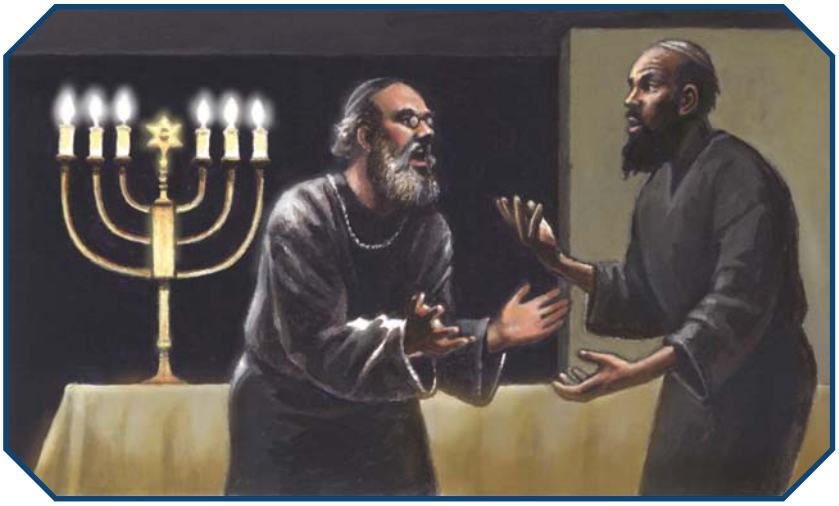
The Jews of Earth at the time of the coming of the Banestorm were a scattered people. Often forbidden to own land, they formed isolated communities within the cities and towns of Christian and Islamic kingdoms. Very few substantial groups arrived on Yrth together.

And yet today, Judaism as a religion and the Jews as a race thrive in most of the major cities of Yrth. While there are pockets of intense anti-Semitism in Caithness and Megalos, Jews are generally tolerated. Still forbidden to own land or hold noble titles, many are craftsmen, merchants, scholars and healers. Because their laws don't explicitly forbid lending money or charging interest – at least to non-Jews – many bankers are Jewish. They have become, as on Earth, a very important minority.

History

The history of the Jews on Earth, as a people and as worshippers of one God, goes back to Old Testament times. They proved stubborn, rebellious subjects for the Roman Empire, although as individuals many were successful businessmen. Eventually, the Romans responded to a Jewish revolt by destroying the great Temple of Jerusalem. This left the Jews scattered and seeing themselves as exiles, but they preserved their distinct identity. This "Diaspora" meant that individual Jews and small groups were caught up by banestorms in many lands.

On Yrth, dispersed even more widely than before, many perished or were forcibly converted to other faiths. Hysterical mobs too often blamed them for the "doom" which had fallen upon them. Some Jews simply failed to find co-religionists to marry. However, a few groups endured and worked diligently to locate and aid others. Enough rabbis were found to preserve essential traditions, although any distinction between Jews from the Western and Islamic worlds vanished.



Meanwhile, Christian and Muslim kingdoms were being created by flexible, pragmatic leaders, who remembered the practical *usefulness* of Jewish communities back on Earth, especially their reputation for medicine. Thus, many such leaders actively encouraged Jewish families to settle in their areas, and protected them against persecution.

The Jewish population grew, living, as on Earth, in close-knit groups according to their own law. Moneylending actually disappeared for some time, as there was insufficient trade to support it and many Jews turned their hands to more immediately useful skills, but reappeared later as old constraints were reimposed. Some Jews found jobs as court advisors and physicians.

Yrth's largest modern Jewish communities are located in the cities of Megalos and Tredroy. Others are found in almost all human cities – there are even a few in Sahud – and indeed, wherever there is a place for traders or doctors, two professions Jews tend to dominate. As on Earth, some have risen to important positions in Muslim courts. There are, tragically, very occasional small-scale waves of persecution in both Christian lands and Muslim cities, usually when someone wants an excuse to destroy Jewish moneylenders' records, but most rulers hate to lose such *useful* citizens, and punish rioters severely.

The People of the Covenant

Judaism, the predecessor-religion to Christianity and Islam, has much in common with those faiths. All Jews believe that God is one and that man was created in His image. Idolatry is evil, as are murder and adultery. Charity is mandatory. The word of God is revealed in the Scriptures; His laws were given to the Jews through Moses. There is some belief in Heaven and Hell, though this is less central to the faith; Judaism has little to say about the afterlife.

Judaism stands apart in three things. The primary difference, which cannot really be overstressed, is that Jews do not believe in the divinity of Christ. To them, Jesus was a holy rabbi, a great teacher, and a historical figure. He was not, however, the literal Son of God, and they argue that the Bible never portrays him as such. To a Jew, the phrase "Son of God" applies to all people, just as their term "Daughter of the Tongue" refers to those women gifted with revelations. Judaism insists that while Jesus was instrumental in bringing the Word to the people of his time, rendering him divine lessens the achievements of his simple mortality. Whereas the Christian Bible turns heavily on the death and resurrection of Christ, his redemption of humanity, and his harrowing of Hell, the Torah focuses on the liberation from Egypt, the gift of the Commandments, and being brought to the Holy Land. Jews in Christian Megalos and her holdings usually keep this sort of thing to themselves, but as with the Protestants (p. 55), this pragmatism does not lessen the fervor of their belief.

Second, it is very difficult to become a Jew. In general, one has to be born one. Jewish tradition holds that God made a covenant with the people of Israel, and they and their descendants are His chosen. He cares for them and will someday send the Messiah to lead them back to the Promised Land, where they will rebuild the Temple; in return, they obey His Commandments and worship Him alone. Jews do not seek converts – the People of the Covenant maintain their heritage by marrying within the faith. However, if a Jewess binds herself to a Gentile (non-Jew), her offspring are considered Jewish; the line passes through the mother in Judaic tradition.

Third, Judaism is a *literate* religion. Most Jewish men and many women can read Hebrew. The Jewish scriptures consist of three primary bodies of text: The Law (the Pentateuch or Torah), the Writings (Psalms, Proverbs, Lamentations, Ecclesiastes, Song of Solomon, Job, Esther) and the Prophets (the remainder of the Old Testament). The Talmud is the collected wisdom of the rabbis, with almost 2,000 years of scriptural interpretation; this is the law by which Jews live. To study the Torah and the Talmud is a holy act. Jews on Yrth learn a scholarly form of Hebrew to study the religious texts; while they don't consider translated Judaic holy works as sacrilege, they stress that God's word is best approached in its original tongue.

Orthodoxy

By the standards of modern-day Earth Judaism, Yrthian Jews seem strongly Orthodox, dressing plainly and following Talmudic laws closely. However, this is a matter of communal identity, not religious obsession; most Jews are adaptable, and tolerant of other faiths and of minor lapses among their own people.

While Jewish laws are many and detailed, most of them amount to general concepts of good behavior, such as not stealing or committing adultery, and are easy enough to obey in most places; a fair range of kosher food is available wherever there is a substantial Jewish community. Therefore, there is no automatic game disadvantage for living by Jewish law However, someone obsessive about the details of such things might qualify for Disciplines of Faith (Ritualism), while someone keeping kosher in the absence of convenient arrangements might be considered to have a -5 point Vow. Either would make Judaism hard to keep a Secret.

Magic

Yrth's Jews have a complex attitude to magic. A number of ancient laws speak sternly against dealings with "magicians," but as it became clear, in the early days of humanity on Yrth, that magic worked and was essentially secular, some rabbis made careful abstract studies to assess *exactly* what was or wasn't prohibited.

They concluded that *some* magic followed natural philosophy and could be lawful, so long as the user was scrupulous about refraining from forbidden studies. Banned topics include most forms of necromancy and anything involving demons,

Playing an Yrthian Jew

Jewish PCs would be perfectly possible in most campaigns, although few Jews learn combat skills today (it was perforce a little more common shortly after the Banestorm first struck), and any who were known to bear weapons or use combat magic would be regarded with extreme suspicion by less tolerant non-Jews. A Jewish character might have Social Stigma (Second-Class Citizen), or even Social Stigma (Minority Group) if based in an area where prejudice is running particularly rife; this is the GM's option.

Jewish converts to the dominant local religion receive a mixture of respect (for having "seen the light") and mistrustful disdain (as people doubt their sincerity); this may rate as a minor negative Reputation (among bigots and religious fanatics), or Social Stigma (Second-Class Citizen) if the general local attitude to the race is especially hostile. They also usually have a negative Reputation among other Jews.

Of course, a practicing Jew passing as a Christian or Muslim would have a dangerous Secret. On the other hand, Jews are so rare in Sahud or the Nomad Territories that few locals have any sort of opinion about them at all, except perhaps for mild curiosity.

period. Any procedure which requires sacrifices or ceremonial invocation of spirits is prohibited as idolatry. Divination is regarded with caution at best, since it attempts to determine the will of God; this branch of magic is usually avoided. Healing spells, on the other hand, are accepted as fine and humane; Judaism is less inclined than other religions to regard suffering as a punishment or a test.

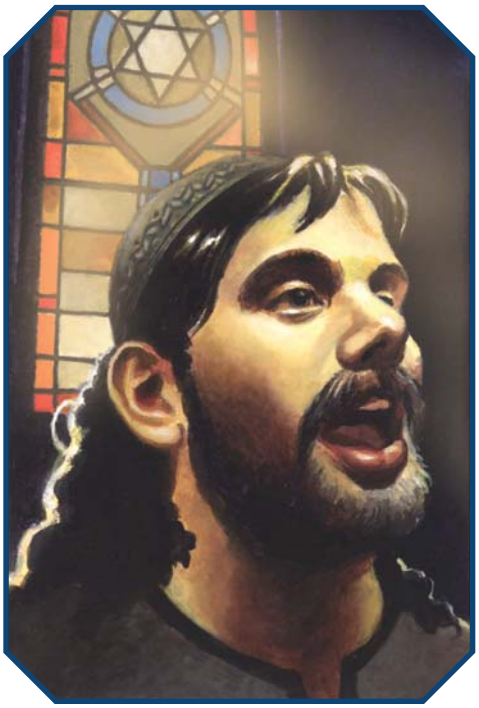
The written judgments of various rabbis concerning magic were collected and now form part of the curriculum of every rabbinical school. Many Jews are hesitant to approach spellcasting, but others study the art successfully. Unfortunately, some prejudiced Christians or Muslims find the idea of Jewish "wizards and witches" terrifying, leading to vicious persecutions, so Jewish mages tend to be very discreet – but they do exist, and some of these *baal shem* ("masters of the name") are highly skilled and respected. Flamboyant or morally careless Jewish mages earn, at *minimum*, a -3 Reputation in the Jewish community.

Attitudes Toward Yrth

The experience of the Banestorm was in some ways even more traumatic for Jews than others; some wondered if God was once again casting them out, putting them far beyond even the hope of the Promised Land. On the other hand, they were *used* to the idea of being scattered and exiled, and they never thought their exile would end without the coming of the Messiah – and when the Messiah *did* appear, he would obviously be able to lead them back to Earth.

In fact, a common school of thought in Yrthian Judaism says that Yrth is a land given as much to Jews as to any other peoples, and hence it can be regarded to some extent as a "secondary promised land." Contrary to garbled reports, few if any Jews think that Yrth *is* the Promised Land – that can only be on Earth – but most hold the comforting belief that Ytarria can be a "new Zion." The tolerant city of Tredroy (p. 142) is even seen as something of a second Jerusalem, the main synagogue there as almost a new Temple. Occasionally, messianic cult leaders arise, proclaiming the Jews should make Yrth their own, but these remain a minority.

Another less popular theory suggests Yrth is merely another phase of the Diaspora, and that Jews should be less inclined to settle here in comfort. "Diasporists" occasionally conduct magical research into ways to return to Earth, but most simply long for the Messiah. A third, small faction, the mystical "Zebulunists," identify the Jews of Yrth with the Lost Tribes of Israel, despite their known origins. All hear occasional rumors of the state of Judaism on Earth but often have great difficulty believing them.



Berakhot and Kashrut

Observant Jews live their lives by strict rules of conduct. This is most clearly seen in the *berakhot*, or blessings, small rituals which accompany a broad spectrum of everyday actions and serve as a reminder that there is no human behavior in which man cannot be met by God.

The dietary law called *kashrut* (adj. *kosher*) says meats and dairy products may not be served at the same meal; in practice, some Jews will do so, but keep separate plates and utensils for each. Marine animals lacking fins and scales are prohibited, and no animal may be eaten unless it chews cud and has a split hoof. Animals should be killed in a prescribed fashion. Certain foods, such as matzah and gefilte fish, are mandated for specific occasions. Rabbis have determined that hardings and woolens (p. 229) are kosher, but milkfish (p. 229) are not.

Rabbis and Cantors

Like Muslims, Jews hold that one does not need the aid of a priest to serve God correctly. There was once a Jewish priesthood, but it was scattered when the Romans destroyed the Temple. Judaism's "clergy," the *rabbis*, are *teachers* above all.

To become a rabbi on Yrth, one must study at a rabbinical school in one of the major cities. Having achieved the required knowledge of the Scriptures and the Talmud, the new rabbi must find a congregation to hire him. He enters into a contract with the community, under which he leads group prayer and interprets the Talmud in exchange for financial support. Like all good Jews, rabbis are expected to marry and have children. A rabbi has Clerical Investment; while one is not *absolutely* required for a synagogue to function – any adult male Jew in good standing can perform the offices – most Jews see religious ceremonies as a rabbi's job. If no rabbi is available, the preferred leader of services is one of the tribe of Levi, the teachers of Jewish tradition. However, rabbis *cannot* purchase levels of Religious Rank; there is no rabbinical hierarchy. An especially senior rabbi, respected for wisdom and learning, *will* have a positive Reputation among Jews, however.

Cantors are members of the congregation selected to be the chief singer and leader of the liturgy in a synagogue. They require no formal training.

Other Religions

While the monotheistic juggernauts have dominated Ytarrian humanity from the first days of the Banestorm, other human religions have proven remarkably resilient on the fringes. Unwilling emigrants from Earth often clung to these faiths as comforting reminders of traumatically lost homes; also, such systems of belief have become badges of individuality for minority groups. Their devotees also claim they survive persecution because they receive direct aid from their deities.

Paganism

On Yrth, paganism is defined as a set of religions based on Europe's pre-Christian beliefs, combined in practice with many other ideas. While the word "pagan" naturally carries negative associations in the Empire, precise theologians point out that the collective term itself is only used for convenience and implies nothing good or bad.

Initial pagan populations came from several sources. A small but significant fraction of early Banestorm victims came from lands or worlds Christianity and Islam had not reached. Also, some claim paganism survived secretly even among medieval Christians and Muslims. Amidst the chaos and confusion of those first days, some new Ytarrians believed their one God had abandoned them. Face with an unfamiliar moon in the sky, intelligent nonhuman beings in the forests and mountains, and secular magic in the hands of mortals, some despaired that the Bible and Koran were utterly unreliable.

In this situation, the idea of a less ordered metaphysical realm – perhaps with multiple gods – presented what seemed a sensible alternative, and some pagan believers found interested audiences. Many such simply desired to make sense of their new world, which had a disturbing tendency to wax abruptly strange just as it seemed to be settling into something like normalcy. Like many of their forebears, these folk eventually embraced religions that intruded much more literally into the mortal world, infusing the land, sky, flora, and fauna with spirits and powers of their own.

While the often bewildering array of pagan cults share few beliefs, what they do share is fairly universal. Primarily, they are *polytheistic*; they worship many deities, each governing some region or aspect of the natural world. While there *might* be one chief god, and while some different gods *might* actually turn out to be different names for the same being, pagans reject the core claim of monotheism. A pagan may choose to worship a single deity, but he would consider it pointless and dangerously rude to deny that others exist.

The Nomad Lands (p. 167) are a pagan stronghold; otherwise, such faiths linger secretly in rural communities and hidden cults (see p. 53). Paganism's popularity is, in fact, stagnating; aside from the danger, pagans tend to assume at heart that other lands have their own gods. Importing one sect's beliefs into a distant land would not only be presumptuous but perhaps insulting, to both the faithful there and their deities.

Pagan priests have Clerical Investment but almost never Religious Rank; most cults are simply not large enough for hierarchical organization. Where paganism is a major public religion, a priest will have some level of positive Status; elsewhere, the position carries a dangerous Secret.

The "Old Religion"

Many rural pagans claim their faith goes back to the Celts and German tribes who opposed the Roman Empire. The truth of this assertion is unknown. Whether these beliefs survived in the shadows of Christianized Europe or were Banestorm-delivered to Yrth from other worlds, if not both, is equally in question. In any case, priests of this "Old Religion" often insist on being called druids – or witches, wise ones, or "horned ones," as just a few examples. Some groups are fiercely patriarchal; others have mostly or all female priesthoods.

Indeed, the "Old Religion" is so factionalized, it's hard to call it a single faith; every cult and circle seems to have its own ideas about every detail. However, all practice a form of nature worship, honoring nature, joy in life, bravery, strength and wisdom; some treat prowess in battle as the highest good. Priests often study magic, which they view as a natural force only made good or evil by action or intent.

The Goddess is an amalgamation of several old European nature goddesses, with elements of the elven Eternal added. She embodies birth, growth, and summer. Her consort, the Horned God, brings death, war, and winter.

In general, this strain of paganism recognizes two primary deities. Names vary, but the first is most often called Mother Earth or simply the Goddess. She is an amalgamation of several old European nature goddesses, dating from the Greeks on, with elements of the elven Eternal added. She embodies birth, growth, and summer. Her consort, the Horned God, brings death, war, and winter. Yet druids point out this is often interpreted too simply: the Goddess has her tyrannical, consuming side, and the Horned God, as death, also represents transition. He is the keeper of all portals. Without him, rebirth is impossible.

Upon death, souls are said to reincarnate into animals or intelligent beings, over and over again – providing worshippers with a sort of basic optimism: while they have no expectation of Heaven, they have no fear of Hell either, and some hope of a better life next time around.

Rituals both celebrate and mourn the changing of the seasons, phases of the moon, weather, and natural cycles of birth and death. Ceremonies are always conducted outdoors, often on the night of the full or new moon; some are solemn, some joyous, some frenzied or darkly disturbing. The most important occur at the solstices and equinoxes and usually involve dancing, singing, ritual processions, and sacrifice. If sacrifices are more than symbolic, they usually consist of fruit, grain, or occasionally an animal. A very few sects practice human sacrifice. Some also consume the flesh of their enemies to gain their strength, partly in celebration of victory, partly out of reverence for their opponents; these are rare indeed, and often live far from what most Ytarrians consider civilization.

Both the oak tree and mistletoe are sacred to the Mother. The former, sometimes called The Lord of Truth, is said to house the elixir of life itself, from which humanity sprang. Mistletoe, which often twines in the branches of oak trees, stays green in winter when the oak is leafless; it is thought the vining plant, so often considered a parasite, holds the oak's life in trust until springtime. Other symbols vary from group to group, but the sickle, pentagram, and ear of wheat are common. Still, as with all the Old Religion, their meanings and uses vary from cult to cult. Ceremonial garb may range from long robes and stag-horned helms to "sky-clad" – nothing at all.

The Problem of Paganism

It's obvious to anyone who studies the pagan religions of Yrth that they cannot all be literally correct; there are too many contradictions. Those who know something of the universe's true nature can see even larger problems. It's also clear, to anyone who has enough dealings with them, that the pagan priests do sometimes make contact with conscious, supernatural, often powerful beings.

Most Christian and Muslim theologians have little difficulty with this. The pagan "gods," they say, are actually Hell-spawned demons, tempting the gullible with false promises. If they don't generally require their faithful to perform overtly evil acts and even appear benevolent, this simply shows they have cunning, long-term plans. More sophisticated thinkers suggest there may be subtle categories of fallen angels and "airy spirits"; the pagan "gods," while deceptive and not actually divine, may not be demonic either, but are certainly self-interested, claiming far more than they can deliver so they can bask in the worship of their victims.

Cynical agnostic wizards (and perhaps some observers from high-tech universes) suspect this is close to the truth, although they dismiss talk about "fallen angels" as being unnecessarily mystical. There are clearly spirits – powerful, immaterial, supernatural entities, possibly of extra-dimensional origin – on Yrth, and some of them seem to profit from worship. Setting themselves up as gods is probably just shrewd strategy. Whether any of them also had access to Earth and did the same there is an interesting but largely abstract question.

Pagans themselves dislike such discussions and differ as to whether all their gods exist. Some insist virtually every religious belief is literally correct and dismiss any contradictions as "higher mysteries"; others accept that some stories may be garbled, although most hold that stories, however presented, usually hide truth or metaphorical lessons at their core. Many believe that the same god may be known by different names, showing one face here, another there; traveling pagans may seek to identify some local deity with their own chosen favorite and then follow local customs regarding his worship. This can get complicated; regardless of whether Zeus, Thor, Indra, and the Spirit of the Lightning Spell really *are* the same being, their characters and modes of worship differ substantially.

Greco-Roman Cults

In some places on Yrth, humans worship the Olympians, the gods of the ancient Greeks and Romans. These beliefs may have arrived in Ytarria via routes like those taken by the "Old Religion," but many suspect they were revived by Simon Menelaus – whose Empire was a conscious emulation of Rome – and then cast aside as too confusing for the populace. These sects are now mostly secret, sometimes becoming mystery cults (see p. 53) as Christianity and Islam both seek to stamp them out. Most common in large cities, Greco-Roman centers of worship often have wealthy aristocratic adherents, thanks to curiosity, impatience with the Church, or tradition.

Ytarrian believers hold that the Roman and Greek gods are the same, despite differences in name and sometimes traditional nature. Any given cult is usually devoted to a single deity, although others may be invoked. Worship usually consists primarily of sacrifices. Goats, fowl, fruit and wine are most frequent; human sacrifice is *very* rare, and usually explicitly condemned. In return, the god is expected to grant requests – a tricky business, since the Olympians are a fickle and temperamental lot. A request out of proportion to the sacrifice made, one which goes against the god's nature, or one which merely catches the deity in the wrong mood is likely to fail . . . perhaps disastrously.

Major gods include the following, listed by Greek name, then Roman.

- Zeus/Jupiter, king of gods, men, and the weather.
- Hera/Juno, Zeus' wife, goddess of marriage and patron of wives.
- Apollo, god of truth, prophecy, archery, music, medicine, and the sun.
- Athena/Minerva, goddess of wisdom and household crafts, often worshipped by classical scholars.

- Ares/Mars, the god of war, whose worship among common soldiers and gladiators is tolerated and even encouraged by some Megalan commanders.
- Aphrodite/Venus, goddess of love and beauty.
- Artemis/Diana, the huntress, also goddess of childbirth and midwives.
- Demeter/Ceres, responsible for agriculture, crops, grain and fruit.
- Poseidon/Neptune, lord of the sea (paid lip service by many superstitious Christian sailors).
- Hermes/Mercury, messenger of the gods, patron of commerce, invention, cunning and theft, and hence popular among urban thieves, but also associated with magic.
- Hephaestus/Vulcan, god of smiths and artisans.
- Dionysus/Bacchus, god of wine, fertility, revelry and drama. (Rumor says that Emperor Diophrates himself occasionally invokes Dionysus.)

The Religion of Bilit Island

The beliefs of those who found themselves on Bilit Island merged and synthesized to produce a faith of dark and bloody gods. Most hailed from Mesoamerican myth, with a few stray inclusions from Asia and elsewhere. The all-too-obvious presence of powerful and bizarre creatures on the island serves to confirm the worshippers' dour pessimism.

The deities of Bilit include the gods of rain (Chac), sun (Kin), death (Kisin), war (Bulac Chabtan), and others; few of them are anything resembling benevolent. The natives of Bilit are not so foolhardy as to *ask* their deities for anything, but they regularly appease them with sacrifices. These usually involve animals, jewelry, or the carefully extracted blood or pain of the worshippers themselves – the higher the social class, the better. Such offerings are not usually fatal, but full human sacrifices do sometimes take place; this is infrequent, less out of restraint than because the victim has to be ritualistically and symbolically perfect.

Bilit's gods are fastidious in their unceasing hunger – though some, such as Kisin, are less fussy. Still, those who manage to stay in their good graces possess remarkable, often frightening abilities. Their hereditary priests have tremendous power – political and magical – second only to their quasi-divine kings, and sometimes superior.

For more on this ominous island, see p. 108.

Norse Cults

The Norse deities are sometimes worshipped in the Nomad Lands, although the "Old Religion" is dominant there; Odin, all-father of the Norse pantheon, is often identified with the Horned God – usually by patriarchal and bloody-handed cults who pay mere lip service to Mother Earth. The people of these lands often see nature as a source of problems rather than as a benign provider, so avoiding naming her is sometimes seen as the best way to avoid her wrath. Thor, god of thunder and battle, is often invoked in a cursory way by warriors of the coastal regions, who say he would not expect more of those with battle on their minds. Loki, the trickster-god of fire, is sometimes *blamed* for misfortunes, in a superstitious way, but never worshipped.

Cults that take Norse belief as a whole are extremely rare but exist here and there. They worship the full pantheon of their gods, propitiating some, warding themselves against others. They have little tolerance for those neighbors who pick what they like from the mythology and ignore the rest, but being somewhat fatalistic, they accept this, continue to live by their precepts, and await Ragnarok, the great battle at the end of time. Gods and men will fight and fall beside one another; seas will boil with the poison of the Midgard Serpent; almost all life will cease. The giant Surt will set fire to Yggdrasil, the great ash that links the nine worlds; all will burn and wither. Then a new, idyllic world, free of pain and battle, will arise.

Magical Cults

Some pagan cults focus on immediate supernatural effects rather than on worship. These "magical cults" vary; some are little more than confidence games, perpetrated by wizards pretending to perform "blessings and curses." Such fakery can be hard to pull on someone familiar with the capabilities of secular magic – but that's hardly everyone on Yrth. Other true cultists seem to have contacted genuine supernatural beings, albeit not usually anything meriting the term "god." A few cults, mostly based in high-mana areas, teach their priesthood a handful of spells, enabling them to retain the loyalty of their followers; such priests may sincerely believe their power comes from a deity.

At least one group, known as the Cult of Spells, has a complex pantheon they claim is linked to the source of all magic. Its priests use spells themselves, but "respectfully" and in a ritualistic context. The Cult claims to despise ordinary wizards, regarding them as enslavers and abusers of sacred power; still, its most senior members acknowledge that these pretenders are touched by divinity, even as they mock it. A few devotees take it upon themselves to punish such "abuse" but are rarely powerful enough to defeat the protections of the powerful wizards they select as targets. Mostly, the Cult of Spells remains in hiding from the religious and wizardly persecution which it has drawn upon itself. Its believers are constantly seeking more of the thaumatological lore which they hold sacred, and sometimes they acquire enough power to become a local problem.

Hinduism

The Banestorm didn't take many victims from the Indian subcontinent, but small, isolated villages of Hindus, mostly of Balinese descent, can be found in southern Araterre and other out-of-the-way regions.

"Hinduism" is in fact a compendium of beliefs; Hindu culture has *thousands* of deities, some worshipped only in small areas. The issue is clouded further by claims that some are aspects, avatars, or incarnations of others. Indeed, some believers say Hinduism is ultimately monotheistic, and all these gods are aspects of the same divinity, known as the *Brahman*. Ytarrian Hindus often revere Vishnu, Krishna (as an aspect of Vishnu), Shiva, Shakti, and Lakshmi, among others. A few cults of Kali exist as well, though these always practice in secret, since most monotheists and even many Hindus regard the four-armed goddess as more nightmare than deity. Priests of Shiva are a notable exception.

Hindus believe in reincarnation, calling this cycle of life *samsara*. A soul's next life depends on its *karma*, the sum of its good and bad deeds in its current incarnation. Unrighteous persons may be reborn as worms, dogs, or even demons. The righteous may become human again, with a station and status proportionate to their righteousness. Exceptionally holy individuals are allowed to pass the Veil of Maya, which shrouds the true nature of existence from all human eyes. Released from the cycle of rebirth, such souls dwell restfully with the gods.

Hindus on Yrth have preserved only a minimal version of the caste system; in any case, priestly Brahmins often have to keep their religious role secret. Hence, Hindu priests usually have Clerical Investment (and often a large Secret, in intolerant areas) but no Religious Rank or automatic Status. They are generally respected in their communities, but this may amount only to a local Reputation. Such figures are usually literate in the classical language Sanskrit.

Buddhism

Various forms of Buddhism arrived at scattered points around Yrth, including both Sahud and some remote southern communities. While it had split into various branches on Earth, Buddhist teachers in Ytarria – who have somehow managed to build and maintain communications – buried their differences and established a common set of teachings, though they may disagree on details. Today, Buddhism is a minority faith in Sahud and an exotic rarity elsewhere. Even in exceptionally tolerant Kinkaku, Buddhism is partly distrusted but not actually prohibited; its teachings are thought to lead to disrespect for social order. While occasionally fashionable among eccentric intellectuals in Cardiel, Buddhism is persecuted by Christian or Muslim authorities in most of Yrth.

Ytarrian Buddhist monasteries, centers of contemplation and study, are traditionally established in remote regions, especially in mountains. Although Buddhists excel at convincing dwarves or elves of their harmlessness, local dragons and trolls are less inclined to be reasonable. For this reason among others, Buddhist monks have revived their practice of the martial arts. Several such monasteries exist around the Sahud-Zarak border; a few can be found in the Nomad Lands, where the locals regard the monks as touched by the gods and treat them with respect, even when the monks deny that such gods exist. Traditionally, Buddhist monks live on alms received from believers; in practice, some Yrthian monasteries are landlords to neighboring villages.

Like Hindus, Buddhists believe in reincarnation; they also hold that life is pain and suffering. The world is an illusion in which humanity languishes. Through wisdom and meditation, one can realize and transcend the emptiness of the world, breaking the cycle of suffering, thus reaching Nirvana – an unknowable state of eternal bliss. If there *are* gods, they are merely souls in various powerful incarnations. It isn't necessary to worship gods to attain Nirvana, and a man can exceed the gods in holiness.

Those who are believed to have reached or be approaching Nirvana are looked to for spiritual guidance. Yrthian Buddhism, borrowing from various Earth traditions, recognizes three categories; the *arhat*, or disciple, who is approaching enlightenment; the *buddha*, who has achieved it; and the *bodhisattva*, who has postponed his own attainment of Nirvana to remain in the world and guide others. How one may recognize such beings for certainty, if one is not oneself enlightened, is unclear; most Buddhists treat all monks and respected teachers as at least *arhats*, if only out of politeness. Various legendary or historical figures are accepted to have been *bodhisattvas*.

Ytarrian Buddhism has teachers, but no priests as such; it regards the idea of intercession with the divine as misguided. Ceremonies tend to be conducted in small groups, and are essentially private; marriage is seen as a secular matter. Teachers often have good Reputations with fellow Buddhists and other advantages, plus Disciplines of Faith (Asceticism or Mysticism), and usually a Secret, but lack Clerical Investment. Buddhist monks have Disciplines of Faith (Monasticism). Buddhist "holy men" are noted for their ability to annoy inquisitors of other faiths; they are, after all, dedicated to the idea of transcending suffering. Buddhist scholars must be literate in Pali and, if possible, Sanskrit, the ancient Indian languages of their sacred texts.

*A soul's next life depends on its **karma**, the sum of its good and bad deeds in its current incarnation. Unrighteous persons may be reborn as worms, dogs, or even demons.*

Sahudese Religion

Religion in Sahud evolved from a collision between faiths and philosophies from China and Japan, including Buddhism, Taoism, Shinto, and Confucianism. These mixed further with stray ideas from other lands and other worlds, as well as assorted peasant beliefs and superstitions. Relatively few priests or monks came over with the initial population, so a great many unorthodox, often garbled doctrines, recited from memory by non-experts, were accepted as truth.

Since then, no one has managed to disentangle any of the original individual religions well enough to establish distinct traditions. The Sahudese themselves seem happy with the results, although their beliefs are *immensely* confusing to visitors. The language barrier only complicates the matter. For more on the spirits of Yrth and Sahudese attitudes toward them, see pp. 8 and 151.

A Stew of Beliefs

Taoism, based largely on the *I Ching*, is a particularly strong influence in Sahud, followed closely by Confucianism, popular among the governing classes – which is befuddling enough for anyone at all familiar with these two traditions. Taoist heritage emphasizes individual freedom and spontaneity, mystical experience, and self-transformation. Confucianism concerns itself with personal moral duties, community standards, and conformity to traditional social roles. In short, Taoism encourages dynamic behavior, while Confucianism stresses stability. Still, both belief systems at base urge one to cultivate character and a sense of responsibility, albeit in very different ways. A Taoist would say this only represents another manifestation of the *yin-yang* which permeates all life. Non-Sahudese usually just shake their heads, or nod them and change the topic.

The pantheistic beliefs of Shinto further snarl the situation, especially placed next to Buddhism. Much of Shinto involves worshipping the *Kami*; this term usually translates as "gods," but more in the Hindu than Christian sense. But Buddhism teaches that there are *no* gods, and to regard any entity as a god is to willingly pull the wool over one's own eyes. Still, the Sahudese make it work, to the marvel and horror of most Megalans. Within Shinto, the Buddha tends to be viewed as another *Kami*; Buddhism in turn considers the *Kami* to be manifestations of various Buddhas and Bodhisattvas.

The interaction of these four approaches is daunting enough, but things don't stop there. Included in this potpourri of belief are myths and practices from Mongolia, Siberia, and pre-Columbus North America, which are simply too bewilderingly diverse to go into here. Suffice it to say that a typical Sahudese's form – perhaps forms – of worship may represent the most impressive melding of different spiritual practices on Yrth . . . or the most literally unholy mess ever conceived. Ytarrian Christians and Muslims tend to assume the latter.

The Heavenking

The monarch of Sahud is regarded as a god by his subjects, who appear to believe this world is heaven. It is, after all, where the gods live, they say. Thus, their ruler is the king of Heaven, and divine. What remains disturbingly unclear to the Empire is whether the Sahudese believe their Heavenking has the right to command the other divine beings which dwell in his domain. It has proven unwise to ask this question of the locals; in any case, the Heavenking, cloistered in his palace, is far less accessible to most Sahudese than their gods.

The Heavenking is also the closest thing to a high priest in Sahud. Whenever a national crisis arises, it is his duty to make sacrifices on the behalf of his subjects. Similarly, a clan leader acts on behalf of his clan, and a father for his family. Some traders have suggested this explains why the Sahudese place such importance on honor or "face" (p. 150); if a man has been dishonored or shamed, the gods are less likely to listen to his prayers. However, it may be just as true to say that this is an aspect of a social philosophy which values propriety above all else.

An'Fo'Tama Monks

The Buddhist monastery of An'Fo'Tama is located in the mountains of northern Zarak, far even from the nearest dwarven community; the monks seek to avoid distractions while they study and meditate, and few people are interested in making the long, hard journey to disturb them. However, some monks occasionally venture into the world, seeking other sources of wisdom. Sometimes they emerge to deal with personal matters they choose to resolve directly, despite their belief that suffering should be transcended, not confronted. A few monks are apparently exiled for some misdemeanor. Most are male, but the monastery has a small annex for female members.

The An'Fo'Tama pursue some unusual forms of meditation in comparison with most Buddhists, although probably nothing dubious enough to draw censure from those who share their faith. Moreover, their meditational disciplines sometimes grant them extraordinary abilities. For details on these skills and further character specifications, see *Mystic Lenses*, p. 213.

Nonhuman Religions

Though Earth religions dominate Ytarria, many of the nonhumans – indeed, almost all of the elves and dwarves – follow their own faiths.

The Eternal

The religions of the Elder Folk, while distinct, are all based on the concept of the Eternal. This is envisioned as a vast, perfect consciousness, omnipresent and unchanging. The worshipper's goal is to understand it, emulate it, and eventually become one with it. Nonsapient beings like animals, plants, and rocks are also slowly ascending to the Eternal in their own way. Indeed, their lack of conscious choice makes it easier for them, and thus the elves revere trees; the dwarves, stone. As the universe grows naturally out of primal chaos, the Eternal is seen as both the prime creative power in the universe and as its emerging unity. Eventually, all will become the Eternal.

Elves

The elves worship the Eternal as it is found in animals and plants, particularly trees. The arboreal qualities they revere are slow growth, silence, endurance, living within life's cycles, and the ability to stand firm against troubles but to bend before breaking.

Elves also respect the interconnected web of ecology and strive to find their proper place in it. Most elven homes are living shelters formed from carefully tended trees and brush. They do their best to take only what they need. Indeed, most of what they consider "sinful" behavior revolves around waste. Immoral acts such as unnecessary deforestation, murder, and sloth are all defined in terms of waste. Thus it's no surprise that elves and orcs (see p. 82) don't get along.

Elves don't have organized religion and churches; nor do they usually proselytize. Those who have come closest to the Eternal sometimes serve as guides, advisors, and ritual leaders for others. They are called *anchaliel* in Elvish and are almost always powerful wizards with a deep understanding of trees. Many humans refer to them as "dryads," and the elves don't seem to mind. While *anchaliel* are the closest thing elves have to priests, they are in no way necessary to elven worship of the Eternal. A solitary elf who never sees a dryad can be extremely pious.

Elves find most human religious doctrines horribly constrictive. While a handful have converted to human religions, very few have adopted Christianity or Islam. Hinduism and Sahudese beliefs are much more compatible with their culture.

Sea Elves

The aquatic elves worship the Eternal as manifest in the ocean: vast, nurturing, and calm, but irresistible. They experience the ocean from beneath its surface; the waves and storms above have little meaning to them. As to their great losses during the Banestorm, they lay most of the blame at the feet of the dark elves. Still, some of the damage is considered their own failure: had they been more like the sea, they might have survived the Banestorm better, by encompassing the threat and engulfing it from all sides. Their current philosophy of rebuilding diverse strength before directing it anywhere also follows from their reverence for the ocean.

Humans almost never encounter the *anchaliel* of the sea elves; those who do sometimes call them "nereids," after Poseidon's retinue.

Dark Elves

The "Defenders of the Shaded Woodlands" began as nothing more than a group united against orcs, but over the centuries their spiritual views have diverged from the mainstream. They believe in using magic to improve on nature, guiding it actively toward union with the Eternal. Most elves consider this perverted and dangerous. Plants and wildlife near dark-elven villages are often visibly altered, even monstrous to outsiders' eyes. They sometimes use these creations for defense. *Anchaliel* of this stripe are extremely dangerous.

> *"Return with your shield or on it" translates into Dwarvish as "Better a broken axe than a bent knee."*

Dwarves

Dwarves worship the Eternal in stone and metal. Like the elves, they practice patience and endurance. If a marble column can bear a mountain for centuries without complaint, a dwarf can endure hardships as stoically. However, they don't believe in quietly swaying aside from great troubles. "Return with your shield or on it" translates into Dwarvish as "Better a broken axe than a bent knee." They also don't regard life as cyclical, but rather as a series of small, gradual changes toward an ideal state.

Dwarves seek spiritual perfection in their craft. Creating things that endure is good. If elves despise waste, dwarves hate pointless destruction. The two are not the same thing; dwarven woodworkers will carve away nine-tenths of a block of wood to get the axe-handle they need, enhancing its value as they do so. The state of dwarf-orc relations is as bad as could be expected, considering the latter's penchant for aimless ruination.

Converted Humans

Almost all humans on Yrth – certainly over 95% – follow human religions. A few, however, find something appealing in the faiths of other races. Some pagans incorporate aspects of Eternal-worship into their beliefs or borrow legends from Loren'dil (p. 22); these latter deities are sometimes presented as the Greco-Roman gods under other names. Other humans follow the Eternal in its pure form, usually emulating elves or gnomes. A few barbarians worship the reptile men's Bozdaag (below), finding him appealingly direct.

A handful of arrogant humans have believed they could become gods as dragons do. When they went to the dragons for advice, the best response was patronizing laughter.

Dwarves see the Eternal in the materials under their hands. A craftsman's product should be functional and beautiful, but most of all it should *last*. The great dwarven halls are as much shrines as they are homes, for every arch and column embodies the Eternal.

In dwarven culture, both civic leaders and master craftsmen fill priestly roles. The leaders perform ritual duties and officiate at weddings and similar ceremonies. The master craftsmen provide moral and spiritual guidance. Creating a whole and sound adult dwarf from the fresh ore of a newborn is seen as requiring skills very like those of metalworkers and stone-carvers.

Few dwarves adopt human religions. Of those who do, most become Muslims. They admire Islam's structure and tradition, and any religion whose holy city is in the middle of a mountain range can't be all bad.

Gnomes

The gnome religion is something of a synthesis of elven and dwarven beliefs. Like the elves, they seek the Eternal in nature, but like dwarves, they believe it is in perfecting their skills that they improve and approach perfection themselves. For gnomes, these skills involve farming and raising livestock. A bountiful crop, healthy animals, and strong children are visible signs of the ideal spiritual life. Gnomes respect awareness of one's home and surroundings; they also respond well to those who understand that small changes, not great remakings, are all that is needed to make Yrth's bounty one's own.

Orcs and Ogres

Orcs believe the Eternal is out to destroy them. It's obviously much stronger than they are and sends storms, diseases, and enemies. Worse, it is by definition impossible to destroy the Eternal, and thus no orc can ever control it (see p. 165). The idea that emulating the Eternal is the whole point of life falls on deaf ears – to orcs, the struggle is never the point. Victory is, and victory means destroying things before someone else does, the Eternal or otherwise. What little formal religion orcs have is mostly a series of warnings: "The world is out to get you! Get it first!"

Legendary orc heroes are seen as having betrayed, outsmarted, or outfought the Eternal; orc wizards claim they can wrest power from it. Some orcs in human lands turn to the bloodier varieties of paganism, or even Christianity or Islam, probably because they offer some kind of hope.

Faiths of Gabrook

Gabrook had a dualistic religious tradition. The goblins worshipped Uunkuy, god of civilization, the guardian against Bozdaag, god of barbarism. The reptile men saw the situation the other way around; they revered Bozdaag, god of strength, the overthrower of Uunkuy, god of decadence. Not surprisingly, all wars between goblins and reptile men were, in whole or in part, religious.

Myth holds that both gods together created the universe. Goblins say Uunkuy shaped and refined a raw mass of potential which Bozdaag had ripped from the void. Devotees of Bozdaag hold that he forged the world out of chaos, and Uunkuy merely polished it and added pointless decorations. Both Uunkuy and Bozdaag supposedly have influence on Yrth, though Uunkuy has very few true followers.

Goblins

On Gabrook, almost all goblins and some hobgoblins followed Uunkuy. In addition to civilization, Uunkuy was responsible for agriculture, medicine, magic, trade, and the like. Acting for the good of society and properly enjoying the fruits thereof was virtuous; giving in to destructive urges was sinful. The religion was highly structured, with the equivalent of priests, archpriests, bishops, and archbishops. The Mouth of Uunkuy, a goblin who spoke directly for their god, oversaw the entire religion.

On Yrth, the goblins made the transition from Uunkuy-worship to Christianity relatively smoothly. There were enough similarities that some early converts believed only the names had changed, with Bozdaag becoming Satan. Few goblins still follow Uunkuy, though many use his name when cursing.

Kobolds

The kobolds of Gabrook, usually slaves, mostly followed the god of their masters. A very few worshipped a third god, Algan, who would supposedly free them and set them above their oppressors. This cult isn't very complicated and still exists among some kobolds on Yrth.

Reptile Men and Hobgoblins

The reptile men and most hobgoblins of Gabrook followed Bozdaag. His faith is about personal strength, about surviving without anything but one's own teeth and claws. Over-reliance on others and the decadent complexities of civilization make one weak and unworthy. Followers of Bozdaag may have companions and tribes, but all must be equally worthy. Abandoning friends in the desert, knowing they will emerge stronger and more able, sets a good example for them. Since

Bozdaag-worship on Gabrook wasn't heavily structured, most tribes had only one holy man (usually also a wizard) who judged what was strong behavior and what was weak dependency.

Many reptile men on Yrth still follow Bozdaag, particularly those who live deep in the Great Desert. They see the Christian God and Uunkuy as one being: the enemy. Some tribes also conflate those two gods with Allah, while others see Him as a third party. To the latter group, Islam strikes a balance between decadence and barbarism. It is obviously a civilized religion, but it places an emphasis on arduous pilgrimages and fasting, acknowledging that too much civilization isn't necessarily a good thing. Also, the story of Muhammad appeals to a desert race. Almost all reptile men who have converted to a human religion have chosen Islam.

Faiths of Loren'dil

Loren'dil had a pantheon of interrelated gods, some of them bitter enemies, who had allegedly been very active among mortals in recorded history. The creation of their world was a complex drama of many acts. Those gods most worshipped at the time of the Banestorm were the survivors of an ancient divine war, in which the children rose up and killed their monstrous parents. One of the issues of the war had been how much deities should interfere in mortal life; the winners were those favoring less interference. Thus, those Loren'dilians who came to Yrth saw gods who acted directly on the world as figures of ancient legend.

On Loren'dil, mortals usually devoted themselves to a primary god but would pray to others when a request fell within one of their domains; gods might choose to grant strength, skill, or inspiration in response to those prayers, but would never manifest personally. The Loren'dilian deities appear to have no influence on Yrth, but many of them bear a slight resemblance to the Greco-Roman gods, whose worshippers believe, with little evidence, that their gods are sometimes active here.

Halflings

The primary deity for halflings was Halaina, goddess of the home. Her symbol was the cooking-hearth, and her seat within the body was the heart. Prayers to her made a house safe, meals nourishing, and children healthy. The other popular halfling god was Heclan, god of trickery and stealth. His symbol was a black hiding-hole, and his seat in the body was the feet. Halflings appeased him with sacrifices to gain stealth and cunning.

On Yrth, most halflings follow the local human religion. However, a few still regard the hearth as holy, some are dedicated members of Greco-Roman cults, and a few worship the Eternal in the style of the gnomes.

Giants

The gods of the giants were mostly on the losing side of the ancient war. Their leader was Chane, god of strength, whose symbol was a fist, and who resided in the hands. Also influential were Otrik, god of untamable seas, and Therneen, goddess of immovable earth. The latter two survived the war and vowed to obey the new order. Chane died in the war, but the Giants often still paid respect to him *in absentia*.

Giants didn't have organized religion on Loren'dil and have forgotten many of their myths since coming to Yrth, but some still follow the old ways. Others have switched to human religions.

Centaurs

The primary deity of the centaurs was Atallie, goddess of wisdom and learning. Her symbol was the *hohck* – a nocturnal hunter resembling a wolverine – and her seat in the body was the brain. Centaur sages were her acolytes, often mixing religion with their secular teachings. Centaurs also followed Atate and Daura, twin goddesses of freedom and the hunt. Interestingly, Atallie was depicted as a giant, while Atate and Daura were believed to be centaurs.

Many centaurs on Yrth still worship Loren'dilian deities, though they've learned to be quiet about this in human lands. Others now follow the elven conception of the Eternal or have become pagans.

Others

Of the other known intelligent beings of Yrth, dragons, merfolk, and shark men have their own widely varying beliefs. Some scholars have attempted to equate these "religions" with more familiar ones, with little success. Draconic worship seems more self-oriented than anything else, merfolk avoid the subject, and even the Sahudese seem wary of the shark men's spiritualism.

Dragons

The great wyrms seem to believe they eventually become gods themselves after attaining enough power and understanding in this world. Given that dragons are apparently an Yrthly race, this may be equivalent to union with the Eternal, but no one has been quite brave enough to ask. Such transcendence apparently takes thousands of years at minimum to achieve. Thus, for dragons, religion is a form of ancestor worship, in which they occasionally ask their ascended relatives for boons. Most dragons, however, prefer to pray only when all other alternatives have been exhausted. Achieving godhood with as little help as possible makes for a better reception upon ascension. The exact activities of the god-dragons are unknown, but since mortal wyrms regard gods of other Yrthian races as unimportant, it is doubtful that the immortal ones feel differently.

Merfolk

Merpeople are uniquely nonreligious. The first merfolk immigrants to Yrth were apparently glad to be away from the strange gods of Olokun, and their descendants look on all religions warily. Some have adopted sea-elven beliefs about the Eternal.

Shark Men

The shark men, by contrast, appear to regret leaving behind their gods, whose names are unpronounceable by humans. They still worship them and seek ways to re-establish contact with them. All available evidence – what there is of it – indicates this would not be good for any other races.

Chapter Four
Lands of Yrth

"Heed, my apprentice, what I tell you of the lands of Ytarria, at the end of the first millennium after the Bane. It was an age of kingdoms and empires, both mighty and meek. Proud al-Haz, home to the Hidden City, to which no unbeliever dared come. Al-Wazif, fierce and strong, where wealthy merchants dealt in strange magics. Chivalric Caithness, where knight battled knight for honor. Cardiel, in which every man held his head high, and cunning could make a prince a beggar, or a beggar a prince. The sun-clad islands of Araterre, with their verdant jungles and blood-stained pirates. Far, strange Sahud of the glittering pagodas and silk-clad warriors. Zarak, the empire beneath, where the dwarves crafted treasures, deigning to sell only trinkets. And look further, to the Northmen of the Nomad Lands, with their strange gods; the wild orcs of the west, who fought each other when they could not fight men; and the mighty djinn of the south, whose secrets none yet know.

"And casting its shadow over them all, the dragon empire of Megalos, dark and brooding, eating and eaten. Know these lands, my student, as they were then. For it was at that time that there came new heroes . . ."

This chapter describes the major regions of Ytarria. It includes geography, history, and a discussion of the society of each country, followed by brief descriptions of significant areas or groups within the nation. Certain cities particularly suited to adventures are covered in more detail.

Countries and Regions of Ytarria

Name	*Citizen(s)*	*Population*	*Government*	*Control Rating*
Megalos	Megalan(s)	16 million	Semi-Feudal Autocracy	CR4
Al-Wazif	Wazifi(s)	6 million	Monarchy	CR3
Cardiel	Cardien(s)	6 million	Feudal Oligarchy	CR3
Al-Haz	Hazi(s)	5 million	Theocracy	CR4
Caithness	Caithnesser(s)	3 million	Feudalism	CR3
Zarak	Zarakun (singular and plural)	3 million	Tribal Oligarchy	CR3
Sahud	Sahudese (singular and plural)	1.8 million	Clan Oligarchy	CR4*
Araterre	Aralaise (singular and plural)	1.5 million	(Principality of Megalos)	CR3
Orclands	Orclander(s)	1 million†	Tribal	CR0‡
Nomad Lands	Northman(men)	1 million	Tribal	CR2
Southwestern Wilderness	?	?	?	?

* Mostly socially enforced; the actual laws are only CR3.
† This is an average, subject to decades-long cycles.
‡ Chiefs try to enforce a higher CR, but killing them for it is not necessarily punished.

Pronunciations

al-Haz: ahl-HOZZ.
al-Wazif: ahl-wozz-EEF.
Aralaise: ARR-ah-lehhz.
Araterre: ARR-ah-TAIR.
Autheuil: AUTH-yoo-EEL.
Caithness: KAYTH-nuss.
Cardiel: KAR-dee-ell.
Geb'al-Din: JEHB-ahl-DEEN.
Hazi: HAH-zee.
Heolford: HEHH-ohl-fohrd.
Kinkaku: KEEN-kah-KOO.
Megalan: MEG-uh-lahnn.
Megalos: MEG-uh-lohss.
Sahud: sa-HOOD.
Sahudese: saa-HOOD-eez.
Tredroy: TREHD-roi.
Uulinn: ooo-LEEN.
Wazifi: wah-ZEEF-ee.
Yibyorak: YIB-YORR-ak.
Yrth: EERth.
Ytarria: ee-TARR-ee-uh.
Zarak: zorr-ACH.
Zarakun: zorr-AHH-koon.

Megalos

Megalos is the mother-country of the Christian nations . . . but not a loving parent. The Megalan dragon symbol is far too appropriate. Old, rich, and strong, the Empire has been at war more often than not. Now it has turned inward, stagnating as the darkness at its core spreads.

Geography

Megalos dominates eastern Ytarria, its greatest cities on its eastern coasts. Many rivers cross the Empire, and its center surrounds the great lakes Acheron and Styx. Weather resembles that of Earth's Europe: northern ports are icebound in winter, and southern farmers raise crops year-round. Winter storms drop snow on most of the country; spring rains are vital to each year's planting.

While Megalos' eastern and southern regions are heavily populated and cultivated by Ytarrian standards, the northern and central regions are wilder. Untamed forests full of beasts separate the settled lands. The far west is almost as densely populated as the east, but with a drier climate.

The Great Roads of dressed stone, property of the Emperor, connect the cities of Megalos. Barges ply the major rivers, and vessels crowd the harbors.

History

Megalos sees itself as destined to rule. World domination was the stated aim of the first Emperor, Simon Menelaus, and many of its leaders still pursue that goal. Menelaus founded Megalos in 1200 A.D., at the end of the Banestorm's most active phase, and found easy prey among the disorganized immigrants. Before he died, Menelaus ruled most of northeastern Ytarria. However, to the south, the great goblin clans resisted the armies of the Dragon. New Jerusalem defied them in the west, and to the northwest, fierce nomads roamed.

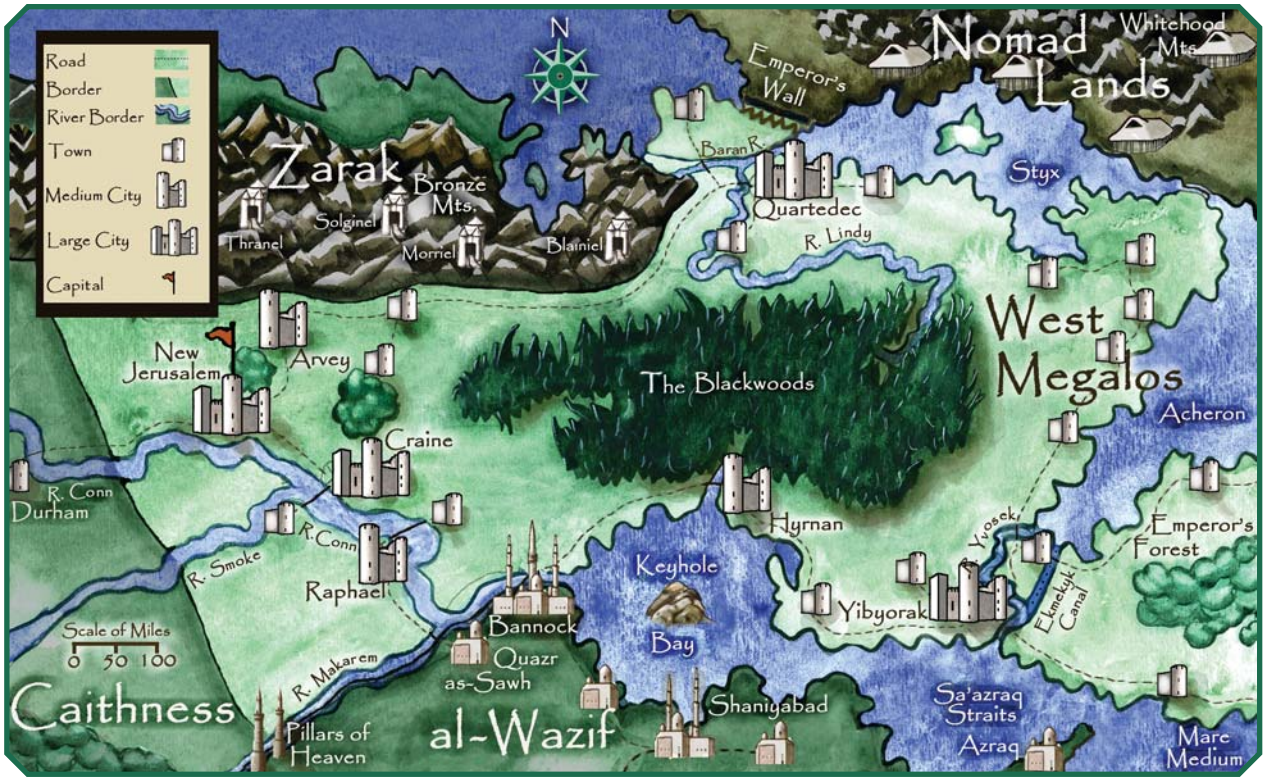
Menelaus' descendants did not give up. By 1300, only the Hospitallers of New Jerusalem stood fast. In 1350, Octavius Magnus, warlord of a realm adjacent to the southern Muslim tribes, conquered them as well. Known for his smooth tongue and hatred of non-believers, Octavius negotiated a truce for the purpose of launching a crusade southward. This was exactly what the Hospitallers had been longing for, and they quickly agreed to join the Empire. Octavius led the Megalan forces in the First Crusade, receiving the new Duchy of Craine as his reward.

The Muslim response was explosive. The wandering tribes of the south banded together to form the countries of al-Haz, al-Wazif and al-Kard. The Megalan nobility were delighted – orcs and fur-clad barbarians were poor sport. As Wazifi armies reclaimed lost territory, al-Kard fell to crusaders in the late 1460s. The region was renamed "Cardiel," and the younger sons of Megalan nobles flocked there to carve out holdings.

For the next century, Megalos was at its zenith. The Empire was invincible – or so everyone thought. The invasion of the dwarven territory of Thulin's Folk proved otherwise. As it progressed, greedy Megalan nobles squabbled over spoils not yet won. Disgusted, the Hospitallers went home, and a sudden dwarven counterattack crushed the invaders. Seizing the opportunity, Northmen overran northern Quartedec, forcing the construction of the Emperor's Wall – a great rampart marking part of Megalos' northern border.

During this period, explorers discovered humans on the islands south of Megalos. The Emperor chartered the Principality of Araterre, and Megalan sailors set out to explore it. In the west, expeditions pushed back the orcish hordes, eventually forming the County of Caithness.

Then, while the Emperor was occupied with political infighting, Cardiel declared independence. Two generations later, Caithness followed suit. The Empire was stymied. Incessant power struggles among the nobles left Megalos unable to recover lost territories or conquer new ones. The next century was marred by constant bickering as one noble after another plotted conquest, only to fail from lack of support. The past hundred years have seen nothing but small gains balanced by small losses, despite two wars with al-Wazif.



Today, the unity of the Empire is doubtful. Megalos remains Ytarria's most powerful state, and the legions are still potent, but the Emperor's control is slipping. Many Dukes and Marquesses, sensing weakness, are either ruling as ruthlessly as they please or actively seeking the throne.

Emperor Diophrates XII is old but still powerful. He has long been infamous for licentiousness and intelligence, and over the past decade he's worsened. His revels are now not just excessive but truly barbaric, and he seems genuinely uninterested in events beyond the central Empire. He is in danger of both excommunication and usurpation, but shows no sign of changing his behavior.

Society

Megalan society is feudal in detail but imperial and autocratic at heart. Caithness and Cardiel are regarded as backwaters. Megalan aristocrats are particularly offended by Cardiel's religious tolerance and female knights. Caithnesser or Cardien aristocrats have a negative Reputation (-1; as too tolerant of inferiors; all the time) among Megalan nobles (a small class of people in most campaigns), though familiarity may erase this.

Social Status

In Megalan society, few people rise above their birth rank. Only truly extraordinary accomplishments can propel one from peasant to knight or noble. An achievement that would win advancement elsewhere will probably bring only money or favors in Megalos. Noble children can advance through inheritance, and some prove unwilling to wait for old age to take its course. For examples of the privileges different status levels carry, see p. 187.

But one may rise by *buying* rank. For 50 to 100 times the monthly cost of living for the desired title, one can purchase a newly created title by making a gift to an appropriate lord. Such titles do not entail duties, lands, or income, and are little respected in other lands, but they carry weight in Megalos. Knighthood, however, *must* still be earned.

However acquired, nobility and rank are socially essential and often convoluted. The Status table defines the standard relationship between position and title, but in practice, relative standing is often subtle and variable.

The Church provides another route to power in Megalos. The highest levels of the priesthood are largely limited to members of the aristocracy, but most monastic orders have their own hierarchies and are open to anyone. Of course, a *good* monk receives only respect; worldly benefits are forbidden.

Nonhumans

Megalos, though human-ruled, is cosmopolitan. Cities harbor all races, while villages are rarely mixed. The duchies of Yibyorak and Sho'joor, as well as many lesser fiefdoms, are largely populated by goblins.

Halflings are also common. They usually live in segregated villages due to issues of scale, making up 5% of all farming hamlets. They typically choose their own mayor, who reports to the local human lord. The long-lived dwarves still remember the attack on Thulin's Folk, so trade with them is somewhat limited; dwarves will not sell their best work to Imperials. Elves are rare, especially in eastern Megalos, because there are few of the wild lands they love.

Magic

Magic is common in Megalos, which is mostly a normal-mana region with scattered pockets of variation. Magery is admired throughout high society; commoners also respect it.

The "Evil Empire"?

Definitely an empire, Megalos is inarguably "evil" in many ways. It conquers its neighbors and covets those it can't; its society is rigidly classist; and its leaders are blithely corrupt – or worse. PCs can easily find themselves at odds with Megalan authority, even attacking it.

That said, many citizens of the Empire are good people. Even high-ranking dukes are not *automatically* evil. Story-wise, Megalos can range from just an autocratic government to a black kingdom that corrupts everything within its borders.

Mages' guilds wield great political power, and even the smallest villages have part-time wizards. Many past emperors also have been powerful sorcerers. Megalan rulers are either wizards or advised by wizards – the exceptions don't live long.

The Legions

Often at war, Megalos keeps a large standing army, supplemented by levies when needed. The Imperial Legions are said to be the best fighting force in Ytarria. *Actual* quality varies, depending on whether they are led by professional soldiers or spoiled sons of noblemen. The legions welcome commoners, and the best officers are often commoners or even freed slaves. Almost all are infantry wielding a mixture of long spears, crossbows, and polearms, clad in mail, with a few mounted scouts. Each legion has an attached corps of wizards; Megalan armies depend on magic. This is one reason they have never conquered mana-poor Caithness.

In wartime, the legions receive support from the elite cavalry of the Megalan knighthood. Although they are formidable individually, these knights have little discipline; their effectiveness depends on their leader's strength.

The most powerful lords keep their own legions as well. When quarrelsome nobles aren't busy fighting the Empire's neighbors, they often fight each other. Strictly speaking, this is against the law, and the Imperial Legions occasionally intervene. Usually, however, such battles are ignored for political or economic expediency.

The Law

Megalan law largely adheres to a semi-feudal pattern. Punishments tend to be severe; death and slavery are more common than mutilation. Megalos can always use slaves, and a whole slave works better. Torture is uncomfortably common, and a torturer who doesn't do permanent damage can earn a high salary.

On the other hand, the rich can bribe their way out of any difficulty except high treason. Sometimes it's called "paying a stiff fine," but the effect is the same. Trial by ordeal is popular; such trials wait until the judging noble's next arena spectacular, where they form part of the entertainment.

Slavery

Despite the Church prohibition on enslaving Christians, slavery is common in Megalos; if necessary, the local bishop can always excommunicate a convict. Criminals, political troublemakers, and prisoners of war work for the state or get sold to nobles for their own use. Megalos also has many slave-run farms, quarries, and lumber camps, the sources of much of its wealth.

It is illegal to free a slave without Imperial permission, which is complicated to obtain; only gladiatorial valor or extraordinary artistic ability lead reliably to freedom. However, some shrewd emperors have carefully maintained a small pool of grateful, intensely ambitious freedmen. Under weak emperors, some nobles have bent the rules to create their own dependent freedmen for similar purposes.

Megalan Arenas

Fortunes are won and lost on this most popular Imperial entertainment. Most nobles cannot maintain their social position without sponsoring gladiators, or, better yet, hosting games. Every town has an arena; the largest cities have several. Private estates have small arenas where favored guests can observe whatever entertains their host. Arena events tend to be bloody; they may include gladiatorial contests, magical duels, ceremonial executions, battles against monsters or animals, and anything else a depraved despot can think of. Voluntary fighters can easily earn two gold marks ($400) for surviving a battle – more if the event is especially unfair, spectacular, or well-sponsored.

Megalan Status and Titles

Level	Title	Form of Address
8	Emperor	Imperial Majesty
7	Imperial Consort or Heir	Imperial Highness
6	Prince/Princess	Imperial Highness
6	Duke/Duchess	Your Grace
5	Marquess/Marchioness	Your Lordship/Ladyship
5	Earl or Count/Countess	Your Lordship/Ladyship
4	Viscount/Viscountess	Your Lordship/Ladyship
4	Senior Baron/Baroness	Your Lordship/Ladyship
3	Lesser Baron/Baroness	Your Lordship/Ladyship
3	Landed Knight/Dame	Sir/Dame
2	Unlanded Knight/ Dame	Sir/Dame
2	Governor/Mayor	Your Honor
2	Guildmaster/Guildmistress	Master/Mistress
1	Squire	Your Honor
1	Captain	Captain
1	Craftsman, Merchant	–
0	Villein, Townsman	–
-1	Serf, Urban Rogue	–
-2	Beggar, Slave	–

Names in Megalos

Human naming practices in the Empire vary by region, class, and race. For popular names among other races, see *Nonhuman Names*, p. 20.

Commoners

Most people are known by one name, with an epithet added – a descriptive word or phrase. A few families adopt epithets as true family names. Most names are Celtic, Norman, or Anglo-Saxon in origin, though spelling may vary.

Some common male names are Alfric, Andre, Ashe, Bruce, Bryan, Edward, Evan, Cerdic, Donnwulf, Francis, Geoffrey, Giles, Hal, Hugh, John, Lyon, Marc, Morgan, Niall, Olen, Osric, Rann, Sean, Trent, Wade, Warren, and Yrving.

Women's names include Adea, Alyce, Blanche, Bronwyn, Cathyn, Ceredyn, Giselle, Juliet, Justina, Katha, Maye, Norla, Pearl, Rosemary, Susanna, Vylette, and Yrena.

Epithets take several common forms: place of birth (John o' the Lake); occupation (Donal Coppersmith); appearance (Merid Redlocks); deeds (Justina Wolfslayer); parentage (Carre Half-Elven); and habits (Adolph Ear-Puller).

Such additions often evolve over a lifetime. Justina Wolfslayer was simply Justina until she was 12. When she started to go to market with her family, she was Justina of Trent. Her love of the bow made her Justina the Archer. Then, one winter, she killed a dozen wolves in two days, acquiring her current name.

Nobles

Nobles always have at least one epithet, often a true family name. A noble's peers frequently call him by the name of his fiefdom: Count Darius of Kethalos is simply "Kethalos" to other nobles.

Most Megalan nobles speak Latin, and many noble children (especially eldest sons) receive Roman-flavored names. Common Latin-style male names include Aloysius, Claudius, Flavius, Honorius, Julian, Leo, Marcus, Procopius, Rufus, Tiberias, Titus, and Valerian. Women rarely receive Latin names.

Goblins

Except in rural areas, Megalan goblins no longer use their ancestral language except for names. However, some goblin nobles have Latin or part-Latin names, such as Jelkejek Viridis ("The Green"). Many humans in goblin fiefdoms also have goblin names. Common ones include Baajikiil, Dakiiri, Gykkii, Jandig, K'jaakis, K'tiiki, Potiij, Shiikus, Toov'tekki, Viitagi, Yig'oor, and Yivirrl. Goblin names typically have no assigned gender. In general, consonant sounds are explosive, vowels are long, and most names have two or three syllables.

The Ministry of Serendipity

Officially, the Ministry of Serendipity is a department of the Megalan Imperial Court, charged with defending the Empire against threats from beyond Ytarria. Knowledgeable people say the Ministry's main purpose is dealing with people, items, and ideas brought to Ytarria by the Banestorm. Much of its work involves suppressing advanced technology, especially firearms and explosives. Underground engineers regard it with fear and hatred, exchanging tales of assassins, torturers, and black-clad wizards who can twist a person's soul. However, its function is ultimately less to suppress than to *control*; if Megalos should ever need to field musketeers, it is the Ministry that knows how.

All of the stories may be true in part. Legends within the Ministry claim that it was founded by Simon Menelaus himself, after he received a terrifying vision. It has existed in some form for centuries, giving it a strong sense of tradition. Its canny agents are sometimes borderline fanatics. They are also subtle; they prefer wiping memories to killing, and loyalty to terror.

Above all, the Ministry is addicted to secrecy. Hence, almost no one in Megalos below the level of the court knows the identity of any Ministry agents. However, every watch captain and landed noble knows a correctly worded report will quickly attract the Ministry's attention – and action will follow, sometimes invisible, sometimes brutally direct. Likewise, failure to make such a report when appropriate will be punished.

The Offices

The Ministry is divided into three offices, each controlled by a Captain under the supervision of the Chancellor of Serendipity. All four of these positions are held for life, although the holders can retire if they wish. Most prefer to die in office.

The *Office of Acquisition* tracks, identifies, and acquires anything that arrives on Yrth through the Banestorm. Hence, many of its employees are wizards or intelligent knights-errant; others are spies and infiltrators, working beyond the empire's borders.

The *Office of Truths* controls the spread of ideas and stories which, unlike material items, cannot simply be acquired and locked away. It deals in the long-term. There is a contentious division within the Office between those most concerned with political ideas and the safety of Megalos, who tend to be pragmatic, cold-blooded politicians, and those more worried by religious heresies and divergences such as Protestantism, many of whom are fanatical priests.

Finally, the *Office of Records* keeps the Ministry's vast libraries of data

"Ministries" of Other Lands

Ministry agents are notorious for kidnapping "interesting" Banestorm victims from all across Ytarria. Similar groups, some less well known, exist elsewhere. In Caithness, Lord Mortlake's People work within the Silver Hand (p. 110); the Prince of Cardiel's chancellors can call upon the Chaplaincy of St. Andrew and its many secular servants – some of them, curiously, Muslims. In Sahud, the Office of Harmony and Thunder and the fictional "Clan Lo" seem to be involved in whatever the Eyes of Heaven (p. 155) declare needs attention. The Roving Inspectors of al-Wazif appear whenever the Banestorm manifests. And in al-Haz, the people responsible have no name or public identity.

Relations between these groups are complicated, especially when the Ministry is involved. When an interesting acquisition is at stake, competition can get brutal. Essentially, they are bitter rivals who have more in common than most allies.

A Suspicious Unanimity

For several centuries, no major Ytarrian nation has seriously violated the unspoken agreement to suppress technology . . . which may seem strange. Some underground engineers believe a bigger conspiracy, using mind control magic, lies behind all the national groups. Who might be Behind It All is much debated; the Jesuits, the djinn (p. 174), and various minority ethnic groups are favorite candidates. Slightly cooler thinkers look at nonhumans; dragons, for instance, have unknown magical resources and enigmatic reputations.

regarding Earth, other dimensions, and technology – using both written and living sources. Hence, it runs a very secret prison; it also employs some immensely subtle and talented wizards, interrogators, and diplomats . . . as well as a few carefully vetted, closely supervised *engineers*.

Dark Secrets

While the Emperor nominally appoints the Chancellor of Serendipity and his Captains, the Ministry is generally a law unto itself. Few emperors have sought to interfere in its generally efficient operations, and those who did, sooner or later, ended up wondering if "their" people had been mind-washed into switching sides. In the last decade, however, the four amazingly well-informed noblemen who run the Ministry are feeling the tables turned; their well-practiced paranoia and otherworldly knowledge has them very worried about Megalos' current ruler. They have barely mentioned this to each other, let alone tried to investigate, but their fears are coming to a head. The Ministry has a tradition of *not* interfering in ordinary court matters – but tradition may soon be set aside. On the other hand, the Emperor may recognize the suspicious look in their eyes before they can bring themselves to act.

Serendipitous Games

The Ministry is most likely to appear in games as an enemy, and a dangerous one; its competent, well-equipped, and devious agents kidnap Banestorm victims, eliminate underground engineers, and scheme to keep Megalos on top. However, gamers can certainly play *heroic* Agents of Serendipity . . . Wizards in Black, the best of the best, protecting Yrth from the scum of the multiverse. This certainly doesn't mean the Ministry can be depicted as *nice;* members are always watching each other for treason, all the while struggling with the gap between idealistic rhetoric and pragmatic deeds. Do demons slain and vile weapons destroyed justify minds wiped and dreams crushed? And why does the Emperor *giggle* when he receives Ministry reports?

Adventuring in Megalos

Megalos is a vast empire with near-infinite possibilities for adventurers. Spies survey military assets and steal secrets for other countries or ambitious nobles. In the legions, grim soldiers and wizards put down uprisings and rout infidels. Every palace and keep is a center of intrigue. Visiting barbarians can find work as mercenaries, troubleshooters, or gladiators.

Many adventures in Megalos will walk the line between embracing amorality and trying to impose some order on a decaying social system. A quick sword and a glib tongue can get you far; a fat purse can get you even farther. PCs may decide to simply take what they can grab, or they can try to stand up for decency in a system that doesn't reward it.

Megalos: Capital of the Empire

Megalos, seat of the Emperor, is Ytarria's greatest city. It is first in everything: the wealth of its citizens, the magnificence of its cathedrals, and the number of its thieves, murderers, and conspirators. Every race can be found among its 400,000 inhabitants, and ships bring foodstuffs from all over the Empire. If a foe could blockade the harbor, the city would go hungry within a month.

Megalos has never been peaceful. As the capital, it is plagued by conflict between court factions. Assassinations are commonplace, and the knights and men-at-arms of opposing nobles fight duels and brawls in the city's streets. Corruption extends from the top to the bottom; the alleys hold cutthroats who would kill their mothers for two coppers.

History

Prior to the city's founding in A.D. 1200, Megalos' site had been an unremarkable fishing town. Menelaus built a massive keep and declared the location capital of his new empire. As the Empire grew, so did the town, as spoils of war and taxes flowed in. By 1230, Megalos was already bustling, and few of the original buildings still stood. In 1290, Menelaus II began a massive program of civic improvements, including a vast sewer system and a solid new city wall (now called the Old Wall). At the dawn of the 15th century, Megalos was the showpiece of the Empire, full of marble buildings, wide avenues, and gleaming towers.

In 1412, the Church established the Order of the Archangel Michael in Megalos. Until then, Megalos had been mildly cosmopolitan; now the Michaelites began aggressively weeding out non-believers. Soon, every Imperial citizen in the city was either a Christian or very good at keeping up appearances.

Arms Control

Megalan law places harsh restrictions on weapon ownership, but as these laws are intended to maintain the power of the ruling classes, they don't apply to knights or nobles.

Plate armor may not be owned or worn by anyone less than a knight (Status 2). Scale and chainmail may not be owned or worn except by couriers, city and castle guards, and the armed forces.

Missile weapons are allowed only to the armed forces, foresters, and guardsmen. Lords who feel secure will ignore vassals using short bows and slings for hunting, but peasants carrying full-sized longbows or crossbows will be arrested.

Military polearms are limited to the legions, city guards, and nobles' retainers. (Peasants using billhooks for work try not to look threatening.) Swords are not permitted to anyone below Status 0. Bladed weapons are entirely prohibited to beggars or serfs, though many wear them anyway; they may carry staves for self-defense.

Magical weapons and defenses are prohibited by law to anyone below Status 2. A servant or smith carrying weapons for a higher-status master or customer will pass if he looks the part, but shouldn't *wear* them or look threatening.

For all of these restrictions, writs of exception are available. This almost always entails a bribe, which can vary from one gold mark ($200) for permission to wear chainmail, to a dozen marks ($2,400) if a commoner wants to carry a polearm. Being a member of the Armsmen's Guild (p. 51) will often reduce the bribe.

In 1630, Emperor Titus II, tired of enduring life in a 400-year-old keep, designed a new palace, to be built a mile outside the wall on a small hill. He preserved the old building, Menelaus' Keep, for its historical value, and the civic government continued to operate from it.

In the late 19th century, Emperor Metellus IV ordered the construction of a new city wall, five miles outside the old one. This enclosed all of Megalos and a fair bit of farmland, too.

For most of the last century – indeed, for most of the last 500 years – Megalos as a city has changed little in character. Since the end of the Frontier Wars, however, the general self-consciousness that has afflicted the Empire has also affected its capital. The citizens of the greatest city in Ytarria care less and less for the world outside, satiating themselves with the diversions found within the city.

Layout and Architecture

Megalos surrounds the mouth of the New River Jordan, which flows into a south-facing harbor opening into the Megalan Ocean. The bulk of the city lies northeast of the river, including all the major governmental buildings. The less fashionable part of the city across the river is sometimes referred to as South Megalos. Many bridges connect the two.

The semicircular Old Wall surrounds the original city on the

The Emperor's Guard

Hundreds of years ago, Megalos won an "unconquerable" island by freeing a thousand enslaved reptile men and telling them it was theirs, if they could take it. They took it. Their descendants are loyal Megalan warriors, and from their ranks come the most feared Megalan legion, the True Dragons.

These reptile men form the Emperor's elite bodyguard. Renowned for their ferocity, they are completely loyal. Few humans can even think *how* to offer them a bribe, and those who do rarely have anything that would interest the inhuman guards. Worse, the guards are permitted to *eat* anyone who attempts bribery. They are said to be baptized Christians, but nobody inquires too deeply into their beliefs.

The True Dragons are led by Captain Ah'ziranthl Dgansis Rextlyin, who has held the position for nearly 20 years. Scarred and canny, he never relaxes. He actively dislikes Emperor Diophrates, but while he is well aware of the changes in the man's behavior, he is less shocked by the Emperor's excesses than most humans. Though he regards the Emperor as undisciplined and soft, Ah'ziranthl would still defend him with his life.

landward side; it is centered on Menelaus' Keep, with a radius of just over a mile. Over the centuries, the Old Wall has become little more than structural support for dozens of buildings that lean against and even burrow through it. The neighborhood within is mostly low-rent, being so close to the docks. The New Wall is over 20 miles long, bigger, thicker, and in much better repair. The land between the walls makes up the bulk of the city, including the palaces and mansions of the wealthy, the Great Arena, and barracks for the First and Second Legions. The city has continued to expand since the construction of the New Wall, but there are still farms and large, carefully groomed parks inside it. The outermost districts, inside and outside the New Wall, mostly consist of warehouses, stables, and homes for the newly rich and the very poor.

Government

The Imperial Government was originally modeled on the Roman Empire, and even now, hundreds of yars later, many similarities remain. The Emperor is supreme, and the position is hereditary. Decisions are made either by the Emperor (advised by his Council) or by the Assembly of high-ranking nobility and church leaders. A seat in the Assembly is technically tied to a specific holding, but many exceptions and variations exist.

The simplest way to get anything done is to convince the Emperor to order it so. As a result, many members of the nobility and Church spend all their time ingratiating themselves at court. Since sending an underling to plead one's case could be seen as insulting, many holdings are left in the hands of family or servants while their lord tries to obtain some concession.

The Assembly handles routine matters and low-level policy and is home to heated discussions about the future of the Empire. Underlings representing people of high rank get slightly more respect here than from the Emperor, but the best way to get something done is still to come oneself.

There is also something like a civil service, made up of a mix of extremely clever low-ranking nobles (who mostly bought their titles), less-competent higher-ranking nobles (placed there to keep them out of trouble), and Church officials (both honest and scheming). The Emperor directly appoints most of the important service positions, and his appointees are usually loyal – not least because the civil service is one of the few parts of Imperial government where one actually gets paid.

The government of the city is not separate from the government of the Empire – running the capital is part and parcel of running the country, and decisions about the city are made by the Assembly. Any purely local decisions too minor for the Assembly typically come from the "City Hall" of Menelaus' Keep.

The primary peacekeepers are the city watchmen. Though adequately paid, their job is thoroughly thankless, and impossible to do honestly – a watchman who refuses a noble's bribe could easily end up dead. Arrogant and abusive, even the best watchman

will not tolerate rudeness or threats from commoners. They are, however, fawningly polite to nobles and officers.

Actual criminal investigations are often handled by Michaelites (p. 64). In the city, their investigations are politically motivated as often as not, and their distinctive blue-and-white surcoats are greeted with trepidation. People arrested by the Michaelites are rarely seen again.

The Factions

In theory, the most powerful faction is the Emperor and those loyal to him. However, that's a fairly small group, and the Emperor doesn't use his power in a focused manner. He can move a mountain with a word, but is likely to lose interest in the mountain between lunch and dinner.

A related faction works to hide the Emperor's depravity and incompetence; Grand Master Jordan Siegebreaker (p. 93) leads this group, which by necessity operates in secret. Thanks mostly to Jordan, they have a great deal of power by which they shape Yrth's perception of the Emperor.

Jordan also leads the Templars, a major power in the capital. Their current goal is to free themselves of Church control while remaining the most significant military order in Megalos. Jordan only spends a small portion of his time pursuing these goals; Master Publius, his second-in-command, does most of the work.

The Church itself is big enough for half-a-dozen factions, most of which scramble for power among themselves. One notable group, led by Archbishop Sosius, is made up of churchmen devout enough to be outraged by their Emperor's behavior but worldly enough to feel the solution is to kill him and put someone new on the throne. Sosius is having trouble finding new recruits, since honest priests are horrified by the thought of a coup and dishonest ones would participate for all the wrong reasons.

Prince Miltiades, heir to the throne, heads his own conspiracy. He believes his father to be completely mad, but as the man is also annoyingly healthy, Miltiades plans to poison him. He is supported by a surprisingly wide array of nobility who think no one could be worse than Diophrates.

The Emperor

Sixteen years ago, a demon attacked Emperor Diophrates XII, but the Guard and Grand Master Jordan saved him, killing the hellspawn. After a Templar mage determined that Diophrates' head court wizard, Phocas, was the demon's master, the Emperor had Phocas tortured and eventually beheaded.

That's what the official chronicles say, and that's what the balladeers sing. The truth is something else again: Jordan, working with a high-ranking Jesuit ally, arranged for the demon's attack, with the intent of controlling Megalos after Diophrates died. Unfortunately, the demon Xuvutruobacaoly outsmarted him; a powerful shapeshifter, he could also alter the forms of *others*. The "demon" who died was Diophrates, and Xuvutruobacaoly is now Emperor. Since Phocas would have eventually penetrated the ruse, the demon arranged for him to be found guilty and killed. Jordan was simply blackmailed into silence.

Few suspected any change for a long time, mostly because Xuvutruobacaoly is not that much worse an Emperor than Diophrates was. The demon has let his debauched pastimes emerge slowly over the years; his servants and the inner court keep these as secret as possible. Xuvutruobacaoly is almost completely ineffective as a ruler; he has difficulty understanding the relevance of border tensions thousands of miles away and finds religious differences utterly trivial. He *does* know he is in a position to lead a great empire into chaos and ruin, and applies himself to that goal – but he also knows that, if he goes too far, he will be found out, and lose all his tasty playthings.

In his role as Emperor, Xuvutruobacaoly appears as a thin but strong old man. He hasn't *aged* since 1989, and his demonic self briefly emerges on occasion in the form of sharper teeth, redder eyes, and other minor changes. His manner alternates between fantastically rude and silky sweet, he quickly becomes bored with any governmental task, and his personal habits are best left to the imagination. Many people know he has changed, but almost none know the truth. Only the most powerful magic could penetrate his disguise, and casting *any* spell on the Emperor without his permission is a quick way to get killed by the True Dragons.

Many of the remaining factions are regionally based, led by high-ranking nobles. Their goals are usually to convince the Emperor to send more money or troops to their lands. For example, nobles representing Zehan and other southern holdings troubled by pirates stand together on getting more ships to protect their ports.

The Citizenry

About 50% of the city's population is human; goblins and halflings make up another 40%. The rest are a mix of every other race, including dwarves, elves, gnomes, hobgoblins, kobolds, and reptile men. Even centaurs, giants, minotaurs, ogres, orcs, and stranger creatures can be found here.

Over 95% of the population is Christian. Adherents of other religions tend to keep to their own neighborhoods. The city is cosmopolitan enough that quiet religious unconventionality is tolerated, but it's not a comfortable place to be a non-Christian.

At any given time, the city also has a substantial population of non-Megalans, mostly traders, some diplomats.

Places of Interest

The three seats of government are the Imperial Palace, the Assembly Hall, and Menelaus' Keep. The first was originally a single huge building of dubious architectural merit; it has grown and sprawled over the years, and now has no coherent plan or style. The True Dragons and the city watchmen aggressively guard it, but between the hundreds of servants and

Jordan Siegebreaker

Jordan is Grand Master of the Templars . . . and a haunted man. He is one of the few who knows Diophrates' secret – because it's all his fault. Worse, if he tells anyone, it could easily lead to a lengthy and painful death, if not at Diophrates' hands, then through the fully justified wrath of the people.

Jordan was once one of the most powerful people in Ytarria. Now in his mid-60s, Jordan's power base is theoretically still strong, but he no longer has the will to use it fully. Instead he hovers by the Emperor's side and tries to blunt his worst excesses. Years of tension have left his nerves on a hair-trigger, and he may snap at anyone for any reason.

dozens of entrances, it is impossible to keep the whole complex secure. Everyone important within thus has their own bodyguards.

The Assembly Hall, near the Palace, is generally agreed to be beautiful, if imposing. The Assembly itself meets in the main chambers, which are surrounded by private chambers, meeting rooms, and numerous bureaucratic offices. The Assembly Hall is guarded as heavily as the Palace but much more effectively.

Menelaus' Keep is old, with signs of numerous repairs. Most of the corridor floors have visibly been worn down in the middle by 800 years of scurrying officials. The city watch and many other agencies have their headquarters here. Since many commoners have legitimate business at the keep, security is loose, though very responsive if trouble appears.

The Imperial Library, marked by distinctive gryphon and unicorn statues guarding the front steps, is the largest public library in Ytarria. Access is restricted to people of Status 1 and above or those willing to offer a bribe of five silver pennies ($20). It houses tens of thousands of books, scrolls, maps, and other documents. The only way to find anything is with the help of a librarian, most of whom specialize in one field, and all of whom expect to be paid five pennies a day. This library is thoroughly censored by the Church and the Ministry of Serendipity; any information that might be dangerous to the status quo is well-concealed.

The Great Arena is vast, capable of seating thousands. Admission is free; the city profits by renting stall space too hundreds of bookmakers, merchants, and less reputable businessmen. Some form of entertainment goes on at the Arena every day; see *Megalan Arenas,* p. 87, for possibilities. One of the most popular events is the twice-annual Grand Elimination, in which 160 skilled prisoners fight one-on-one, to the death, until only 10 remain. These aren't forced to fight each other, but neither are they freed until they've won a total of 50 combats. The emperor is usually on hand for the last few bouts, watching from the Imperial Box.

The New Wall has three gates, oriented roughly southwest, north-northeast, and northwest. (The Old Wall has many gates and gaps.) There is no serious attempt at security; hundreds of people pass the bored guards every hour, morning, noon, and night. If someone needs to be prevented from entering or leaving the city, however, the head of the watch can notify the guards magically and send an extra platoon to each gate within minutes.

The sewers of Megalos are an architectural marvel. Menelaus II, who had a keen interest in urban design, hired a hundred dwarves to construct a system that would serve a population five times its then-current size. The subterranean ducts have been extended several times since, and not always for the purpose of drainage. Many nobles have had private escape tunnels put in on the city's bill, and many more poor but desperate people have dug their own extensions. No complete maps exist, even in official records, and no one individual has explored more than a fraction of the system.

The Midlands

This area is heavily cultivated except for the Emperor's Forest. Wild animals larger than squirrels and rabbits are almost unknown. Wheat, oats, rye, and hay are the most common major crops, as well as flax, sugar beets, and apple and cherry orchards. The hills west of the capital are rich in tin and iron ore.

Hidelban

This duchy is one of the breadbaskets of the Empire. The region is well watered by creeks and streams, and its small chief city hugs the banks of the navigable River Bressel. The buildings are mostly one to three stories, either brick or shingled. They have high, peaked roofs, and the streets are notoriously narrow. The Duke's castle is ancient and of solid stone construction.

Adventuring in the City of Megalos

As a corrupt capital city, Megalos is an ideal site for a wide range of adventures. At street level, nearly anyone could be in need of protection, troubleshooters, or ombudsmen-with-swords. Merchants could be having trouble with gangs; visiting diplomats need bodyguards; and nobles are always being blackmailed.

At higher levels, characters can be merchants themselves, wheedling profits out of the most competitive market in Ytarria, or nobles trying to get concessions from the civic government. At the top, the city of Megalos is where much of the fate of the continent is decided. Any attempt to change the course of the Empire will have to end here, possibly by finally dealing with the Dark Emperor himself.

Diophrates' next visit may be marred by a hunting "accident" . . .

Politically, the area has a turbulent history. The people of the Barony of Scariswic, two day's ride northwest of Hidelban Town, revolted 15 years ago, killing their baron. Duke Kylar put down the uprising severely; Scariswic has never recovered. Kylar died of a sudden illness soon after and was succeeded by his son, Cuin. Today, the young Duke Cuin depends heavily on the advice of his chamberlain, Lord Maskill. With his guidance, Hidelban has prospered, but its relations with other duchies have suffered. Cuin is unusually power-hungry, and his personal legions have grown large. The County of Kethalos (p. 96), currently weak, could be his first target.

Hunt Tower

Hunt Tower is the lodge used by the Emperor when he hunts in his Forest. These woods of pine and oak surround a small mountain range harboring fierce monsters; the rest of the forest contains safe beasts – nothing more formidable than tigers and gryphons (see p. 221). Poaching in the forest is a capital offense, though local nobles are allowed a limited number of kills. The Tower is a five-story stone structure, surrounded by a sprawling collection of stables and vast wood-beamed halls. Social life at the Tower is marked by regular feasts, where the nobility gorge themselves on the best cuts from rare magical animals.

Technically speaking, the tower, the town around it, and the forest itself are the fiefdom of Prince Miltiades, the royal heir. Megalan emperors know better than to bestow powerful fiefdoms on family members who might use those resources to take the throne, so it is customary to place the Emperor's Forest in the prince's care, since it has no significant population from which to raise troops. However, few princes are willing to live so far from the court, so day-to-day management is left to the hereditary leader of the Emperor's huntsmen, currently the Marquis Honore Bourmont. Honore is loyal to the prince, and knows of his plans (p. 92); he has been capturing forest beasts, training them to attack people dressed like the emperor, and releasing them near the Tower. Diophrates' next visit may be marred by a hunting "accident."

Mehan

The Duchy of Mehan is one of the richest in Megalos. Its fleet controls trade and fishing on most of Lake Acheron, and Duke Thomas holds land on both sides of the lake. Wool, grain, furs, and copper ore from the southern Whitehood Mountains pass from Mehan via boat to Yibyorak and then to the Sa'azraq Straits. Mehan mustard is also a major export item. The city of Mehan is a mix of stone and wood construction, with many large public plazas.

Mehan is an important religious center, and the great St. Paul's Cathedral – where the Curia holds its conclaves – is a popular pilgrimage site. Vettius, the Archbishop of Mehan, rules the coastal town of Thysdretum to the south and is second only to the Duke in influence.

Vettius' work has been complicated lately by a popular heresy stating that mages are God's chosen. This belief has popped up here and there over the years, and the Curia does not approve. The agency behind the current outbreak of heresy is a secret wizardly society called the Manites (see box). But this is still a mystery to Vettius, who wants to restore Mehan's reputation for orthodoxy. The Duke has been no help; he prefers the atmosphere at the Emperor's court.

The Northern Marches

With the exception of the Blackwoods and the Emperor's Forest, this is the wildest region of Megalos. Cultivated lands are separated by scraggly grasslands and gloomy forests of pine and fir. These lands are home to treetippers (p. 225), foxes, elk, and dangerous beasts such as wolves, bears, wild boar, and night-stalkers (p. 223). Along the northern coasts seals and walrus are common, and whales and other sea monsters are occasionally sighted.

Farmers here grow oats, rye, beans, lettuces, root vegetables, and lightbush, an Yrth-native shrub whose seeds provide good-quality lamp oil. Ranchers raise cattle, woolens (p. 229), and pigs.

The Manites

The Manites were originally a secret society of wizards, formed to combat a magic-hating group of heretics called the Penitentines. They eventually succeeded in taking mental control of the Penitentine leaders and discrediting the cult. With their purpose fulfilled, most of the individual Manites went their separate ways . . . but some among their number found that they enjoyed exercising secret power.

Today, the Manites are using mind-influencing magics to spread the idea that mages are touched by God and should be respected, even venerated. Their "alterations" to the minds of prominent citizens occasionally have side effects; a few community leaders have had to be restrained after they tried to attack the voices in their own heads.

The Manite leaders seek to recruit both wizards and untrained mage-born to swell their ranks. To their dismay, though, entirely too many of their recent recruits have been *true* believers in the heresy . . .

Lord Claudius Maskill (525 points)

Maskill was a young vampire and powerful mage in the 18th century when an ambitious knight trapped him in a crypt surrounded by a stream. He survived by casting Suspended Animation on himself, setting an Awaken spell to go off if someone should enter the crypt. Centuries later, drought and an inquisitive girl freed him, and he took vengeance on the knight's descendants, the ruling family of Scariswic. Maskill arranged for the 1990 uprising and the death of Baron Angus. He then maneuvered himself into his current position by poisoning the Duke and magically enslaving his son.

Today, Maskill plots to supplant the Emperor. He suspects the truth about Diophrates – evil knows evil – but is confident in his own powers. Nevertheless, he may be moving too quickly. Many powerful people are nervous about Hidelban, and Maskill has had trouble keeping his nature hidden, given his vampiric weaknesses. Too many servants have vanished, and Maskill's wife Lydia (Angus' daughter, the girl who freed Maskill), driven mad by years of enslavement, has begun babbling dark secrets at awkward times.

Lord Claudius Maskill

Age 299; human vampire; 6'; 165 lbs.; black hair and eyes, white skin.

ST 19 [20]; **DX** 13 [60]; **IQ** 14 [80]; **HT** 13 [30].

Damage 2d-1/3d+1; BL 72 lbs.; HP 23 [0]; Will 15 [5]; Per 18 [0]; FP 13 [0].

Basic Speed 6.5 [0]; Basic Move 6 [0]; Dodge 9; Parry 9; Block 9.

Social Background

TL: 3 [0].

CF: Christian region [0].

Languages: Anglish (Native/Native) [0]; Arabic (Accented/Accented) [4]; Latin (Native/Native) [6]; Northland (Accented/Accented) [4].

Advantages

Attractive [4]; Charisma 2 [10]; Danger Sense [15]; Eidetic Memory [5]; Hard to Kill 2 [4]; Magery 3 [35]; Recovery [10]; Sensitive Touch [10]; Silence 2 [10]; Smooth Operator 1 [15]; Status 2 [10]; Vampire (p. 201) [100]; Wealth (Wealthy) [20].

Perks: Deep Sleeper [1].

Disadvantages

Callous [-5]; Compulsive Behavior (Always seeks vengeance) (12) [-10]; Curious (12) [-5]; Enemies (Assorted minor Hidelban nobles; Fairly often, 9 or less) [-10]; Megalomania ("I will replace the emperor.") [-10]; Reputation -2 (Unsettling chamberlain – or worse?; People of Hidelban and many Megalan nobles, small group; Sometimes, 10 or less) [-2]; Sadism (15) [-7]; Secret (Evil megalomaniacal vampire; possible death) [-30]; Selfish (15) [-2].

Quirks: Attentive; Careful; Obsessively tidy [-3].

Skills

Acting-16 (IQ+2) [4]*; Administration-15 (IQ+1) [4]; Alchemy/TL3-11 (IQ-3) [1]; Area Knowledge (Hidelban) -14 (IQ+0) [1]; Body Language-17 (Per-1) [1]; Brainwashing/TL3-14 (IQ+0) [4]; Brawling-13 (DX+0) [1]; Cloak-12 (DX-1) [1]; Connoisseur (Wine)-13 (IQ-1) [1]; Crossbow-13 (DX+0) [1]; Current Affairs/TL3 (Megalos)-15 (IQ+1) [2]; Detect Lies-17 (Per-1) [1]*; Diplomacy-15 (IQ+1) [4]*; Fast-Talk-14 (IQ+0) [1]*; Forgery/TL3-13 (IQ-1) [2]; Heraldry-13 (IQ-1) [1]; Hidden Lore (Demons)-13 (IQ-1) [1]; History (Hidelban) -13 (IQ-1) [2]; Holdout-13 (IQ-1) [1]; Hypnotism-14 (IQ+0) [4]; Interrogation-15 (IQ+1) [4]; Intimidation-16 (Will+1) [2]*; Knife-13 (DX+0) [1]; Law (Megalan Property)-12 (IQ-2) [1]; Lip Reading-17 (Per-1) [1]; Lockpicking/TL3-13 (IQ-1) [1]; Mind Block-15 (Will+0) [2]; Observation-17 (Per-1) [1]; Occultism-15 (IQ+1) [4]; Poisons/TL3-12 (IQ-2) [1]; Politics-16 (IQ+2) [4]*; Research/TL3-13 (IQ-1) [1]; Riding (Equines)-12 (DX-1) [1]; Savoir-Faire-16 (IQ+2) [2]*; Shadowing-14 (IQ+0) [2]; Shortsword-12 (DX-1) [1]; Stealth-14 (DX+1) [4]; Thaumatology-16 (IQ+2) [4]†; Traps/TL3-13 (IQ-1) [1].

Spells

Analyze Magic-15 [1]†; Apportation-15 [1]†; Aura-15 [1]†; Awaken-15 [1]†; Blur-15 [1]†; Bravery-15 [1]†; Charm-15 [1]†; Clumsiness-15 [1]†; Cold-15 [1]†; Command-15 [1]†; Continual Light-15 [1]†; Counterspell-15 [1]†; Create Fire-15 [1]†; Create Water-15 [1]†; Darkness-15 [1]†; Daze-15 [1]†; Deathtouch-15 [1]†; Deflect Missile-15 [1]†; Delay-15 [1]†; Detect Magic-15 [1]†; Dispel Magic-15 [1]†; Emotion Control-15 [1]†; Enslave-14 [1]†; Extinguish Fire-15 [1]†; False Memory -15 [1]†; Fascinate-15 [1]†; Fear-15 [1]†; Fog-15 [1]†; Foolishness-15 [1]†; Forgetfulness-15 [1]†; Heat-15 [1]†; Hide Thoughts-15 [1]†; Hinder-15 [1]†; Identify Spell-15 [1]†; Ignite Fire-15 [1]†; Itch-15 [1]†; Lend Energy-15 [1]†; Lend Vitality-15 [1]†; Light-15 [1]†; Link-15 [1]†; Lockmaster-15 [1]†; Loyalty-15 [1]†; Madness-15 [1]†; Magelock-15 [1]†; Mass Daze-15 [1]†; Mass Sleep-15 [1]†; Mass Suggestion-15 [1]†; Mind-Reading-15 [1]†; Mind-Sending-15 [1]†; Pain-15 [1]†; Panic-15 [1]†; Paralyze Limb-15 [1]†; Permanent Forgetfulness-14 [1]†; Purify Water-15 [1]†; Recover Energy-15 [1]†; Resist Fire-15 [1]†; Rooted Feet-15 [1]†; Seek Earth-15 [1]†; Seek Water-15 [1]†; Seeker-15 [1]†; Sense Emotion-15 [1]†; Sense Foes-15 [1]†; Shape Fire-15 [1]†; Shape Water-15 [1]†; Sleep-15 [1]†; Spasm-15 [1]†; Suggestion-15 [1]†; Suspended Animation-15 [1]†; Telepathy-14 [1]†; Terror-15 [1]†; Trace-15 [1]†; Truthsayer-15 [1]†; Weaken Will-15 [1]†; Will Lock-15 [1]†; Wither Limb-15 [1]†.

* +1 from Smooth Operator.

† +3 from Magery.

GMs who wish to emphasize Maskill's social connections may add Contacts and Favors as appropriate. He has his fingers deep into many levels of Hidelban society.

Azer

This city is the only major port on Dyecastle Island, off the eastern coast. Heavily wooded in parts, the island is known for its shipbuilders. Indeed, these have made such inroads into the best, most accessible woods that there is concern for the future of the industry.

Azer's other claim to fame is the Templar College of Battle Magic, a rambling collection of keeps and halls on a hill overlooking the city. The College trains for both the Templars and the Legions. The faculty's researches sometimes yield spectacular results – local gamblers bet on how long before the next explosion. Young students come down the hill to the city for entertainment. Their magical duels (technically forbidden) always draw crowds.

The college grounds also hold a Jesuit mission. The bailiff who invited the Jesuits to the College hoped to learn some of their unusual magical secrets; this ploy has been a failure, but the Jesuits do invite talented students to join their order. This is controversial and divisive, since many Templars do not entirely trust Jesuits, and students who do join become very tight-lipped shortly thereafter.

Kethalos

The County of Kethalos is located on the Johns River in northwest Megalos. The main city consists of innumerable buildings of timbered construction along the coast, backed by a few solid stone structures. In times of peace, Kethalos prospers from its fishing fleet and from trade with the Northmen across the bay. However, Count Darius is not terribly smart, and some vengeful Northmen remember how he helped to drive them back when they attacked in the early 1990s.

An excellent knight, good-natured and handsome, Darius would much rather be hunting and jousting than governing. However, he understands his duty and tries his best. His mismanagement is nevertheless making Kethalos weak, and it's only a matter of time before the Northmen try again. There have already been a few stealthy raiding parties, and some people don't go out at night for fear of "nomad savages."

Adventuring in Azer

As a school of magic, the Templar College is an ideal setting for a campaign of youthful mages growing into power and adulthood. Students typically come to the College around age 18. They are 95% male; women are not allowed in the Templars, and very scarce among the Legion battle mages, so any at the College have powerful patrons. However, fully 20% are nonhuman (primarily goblins and halflings). Almost all come from noble families. The curriculum focuses on battle magic, but also touches on healing and communication spells, and private classes are available on nearly any non-black branch of magic.

Adventures for students at the college can include conflicts between the students, conspiracies among the faculty, friction with the citizens of Azer, and the mystery of the Jesuits. The administration and bailiff expect the students, as knights-in-training, to behave like mature adults. They are inevitably, repeatedly disappointed; many of the students are arrogant and vicious.

Myrgan

The most northern Megalan city, Myrgan thrives on trade with the Nomad Lands and vies with Quartedec for Sahudese business. Although nearby fields are fertile during the short northern summers, commerce is the lifeblood of the city. Its thick-walled, close-packed buildings loom over the snowy streets in the winter; some show Sahudese architectural influence.

Ten years ago, the son of Viscount Rufus, then ruler of Myrgan, bungled a trade negotiation with Sahud so badly that the Heavenking declared a high war. When Rufus insulted their champion, this became a low war. Rufus was then killed by a Sahudese assassin. The local merchants, who had disliked Rufus for his extortionate taxes, agreed that this was his own fault, negotiated a peace, and pulled strings so that their guildmaster, Walsham Markant, became a Baron and the new ruler. Since the merchants control most of the economic power in Myrgan, this was largely unopposed, although Rufus' family is naturally bitter.

Between Walsham's sensible policies and the new peace with the Heavenking, relations with Sahud blossomed; Myrgan now has the largest Sahudese community outside the country itself. This community of several hundred mostly avoids friction with the Myrgans by being insular and very polite. Unfortunately, more and more trade is coming through "Sahud Town" before the Megalan merchants get their hands on it, creating resentment. Attempts to intimidate the Sahudese traders verbally are met with feigned if polite incomprehension. The few instances of actual violence have been repelled by stunningly effective martial arts and occasional magic. The situation is on the verge of deteriorating into outright war.

Teridar

Teridar is the richest city in northern Megalos, the seat of both an Earl and an Archbishop and the site of one of only four Thomasite hospitals in Ytarria. Located on a south-facing cove at the mouth of a fertile river valley, it enjoys mild winters. Many of its buildings are huge wooden halls, symbols of civic pride.

This region boasts the greatest lumber camp east of Lake Acheron, worked by the slaves of Earl Sigmund Bonus. Using those same slaves, Sigmund also sponsors lavish arena spectacles. One regular event is the Libertatum, in which four slaves battle each other for potential freedom. The Earl petitions the Emperor to release the victor – petitions which somehow never succeed. The slaves

City of the Dead

Rumors say the darkest city in Megalos lies somewhere near Lake Styx. These tales of a shadowed city of necromancers and zombies have never been confirmed. Those who seek it out either vanish or return stating with impressive certainty that it does not exist. The few supposedly reliable texts on the subject have all been lost or destroyed, but the Ministry of Serendipity doubtless secured its own copies centuries ago.

are starting to realize this, and constant unrest and minor acts of rebellion now plague the area. The Earl, who blames these troubles on the Emperor or the bureaucracy, is contemplating ignoring the Imperial tax collectors.

The Southlands

This warm, heavily settled region is known for its cotton and hemp plantations, vineyards, olive orchards, and cattle.

Dekamera

Dekamera, on the estuary of the River Regina, is one of Ytarria's finest ports. Though not as busy as Megalos, its sheltered harbor enjoys mild weather year-round. Its buildings are mostly low stone structures with flat roofs. The center of trade between al-Wazif, Cardiel, and the eastern Empire, its importance is further enhanced by pirate activity affecting ports to the south. Pleas for aid from Sho'joor and Zehan have fallen on deaf ears.

The previous Earl of Dekamera, Gavin Magnus, was known for raiding towns in al-Wazif with his private fleet. One of these raids ended with his son Taveon in Wazifi hands. Gavin's rescue attempts failed, and, several years later, he died, bitter and angry. Meanwhile, the Wazifis had treated Taveon as a guest. When the Frontier Wars ended, they returned him to Dekamera. This was a miscalculation; Taveon deeply resents the Wazifis for his situation and is mustering forces for further raids (see p. 134).

Ekhans

The Duchy of Ekhans is as famous for its rich plantations and vineyards as for its herds of cattle, which feed much of the surrounding lands. At the center of this rural splendor is the city of Ekhans, one of the most prestigious ducal holdings in Megalos.

Currently, Ekhans is suffering from a rash of nighttime dragon attacks on its cattle. There appear to be at least five of the beasts. Nobody has killed one yet, or even reliably traced one back to its lair. The best guesses say that they live either in the Ekhans Forest a hundred miles to the east, or under the waters of Sorcha Bay to the northeast. It is clear that the dragons are intelligent and informed – they've been picking off the best cattle in the herds.

Min

The city and barony of Min are at the southernmost tip of the Megalan mainland. With poor farmland and a harbor too shallow for large merchant vessels, Min is struggling. The region's major industries are milkfish farming, fishing, and clam-diving. Without this income, Baron Martignac of Min would be a pauper. Min's one claim to fame was its role as the staging area for the invasion of al-Kard 500 years ago. No one has paid much attention to it since.

These days, however, Min is a haven for pirates. The harbor is fine for small war galleys and quick sailboats. Using nearby islands as bases, the pirates exact a heavy toll on shipping between Cardiel, Sho'joor, Zehan, and Araterre. Many traders give the entire region a wide berth. Baron Martignac would rather run his barony within the law, but he can't ignore the economic benefit of pirates spending their loot in his city. His tolerance has reached the point that famous pirates can now cheaply bribe their way out of any trouble they cause. The rich protect themselves with guards (often ex-pirates themselves), but the poor are frequently prey to the whims of drunken cutthroats.

Serrun

The region around the city of Serrun, home of the Order of St. Olybrius, is a feudal holding of the Archbishop of Serrun. Famously prosperous, its vineyards and farmlands benefit from a mild climate, and merchants grow rich from the trade in Serrun cotton cloth, demanded all over Ytarria. Though Serrun overlooks the coast, its rocky cliffs and unpredictable currents make it a minor seaport; only smaller boats can safely navigate its harbor. Thus, most of its trade is overland to Dekamera, Zehan, or Ekhans.

Pirates

Trading ships crossing the Mare Media, the Erythraean Sea, and the southern parts of the Megalan Ocean are always at risk from pirates. Most ships, of course, make it to their destinations unscathed, but too many become plunder to be ignored.

The majority of pirates are rapacious criminals. They have some honor among themselves, but no sympathy or mercy for their prey unless a rich ransom is possible. A very few possess scruples and ideals, such as those who attack slave ships and immediately free the slaves. Others restrict their attacks to one target, out of revenge or for political reasons; the latter often want to free Araterre from Megalan control.

Some Yrthian rulers sponsor "privateers" – raiders who are supposed to attack only their nation's enemies, and who may even claim the status of prisoners of war if captured. The distinction is little respected in practice.

While Archbishop Nikolai is technically the supreme authority in the area, the de facto power is the devious Count Sergius, lord of Shambray. Over recent decades, he has carefully manipulated the populace into resenting Nikolai. They now see Sergius as their protector from the tyrannical whims of the Archbishop. In truth, Sergius' only concern is acquiring as much power as possible. Once he feels his grip on Serrun is secure, he plans to infiltrate the power structure in Ekhans.

Nikolai, while strict and deeply involved in Church politics, is truly pious and genuinely wants the best for everyone. While aware that Sergius is less than trustworthy, he is too embroiled in affairs in the capital to pay proper attention. Eventually, Sergius will probably overreach himself, with ensuing complications.

Sho'joor

Sho'joor is located on a large, deep bay on Megalos' southern coast. While traditionally a stopping point for vessels traveling between Megalos and the Islamic countries, pirate activity has reduced this traffic, traders going to Dekamera or Sauvons instead. Duke Yivirrl of Sho'joor, a goblin, has recently arranged for aid from the Imperial Navy; while area shipping is now *slightly* safer, the local economy has yet to recover. Worse, Yivirrl has no fallback position – if the Emperor should whimsically recall the ships, the city would collapse into poverty.

Zehan

Zehan is in a similar position to Sho'joor, though it also profits from trade with sea elves and merfolk. Instead of "pointlessly" appealing to the Emperor, Count Aloysius of Zehan has made a deal with the sea-lords of Sauvons. They are providing him with advanced ships and capable crews, which he is paying for out of steep taxes on everything *but* shipping. He is also attempting to hire sea elves to spy on the pirates. If they can locate the major pirate hideouts, he may be able to solve his problems with a few swift strikes. However, this may place him in violent confrontation with Baron Martignac of Min.

The Western Empire

The lands west of Lake Acheron are drier than eastern Megalos. The ominous Blackwoods dominate the central region, while the far west and north are mostly rolling plains. In addition to standard crops such as wheat, farmers grow peaches and pecans. Cattle, hardings (p. 229), and horses are the most common livestock. Antelope, bison, zebra, and wild horses roam the western plains.

Arvey

Snuggled in the foothills of the Bronze Mountains, the Barony of Arvey marked the western border in the 1300s. Today it is the second-largest center of trade with Zarak. Though few dwarves make their home in the city, they are a common sight wandering the streets or selling their fine work. As the sturdy stone city is very hilly, many streets are actually stairs.

Craine

Famous for its wide boulevards flanked by beautiful granite and marble buildings, Craine, on the River Conn, is the greatest city in western Megalos and a major center for Caithness-Megalan trade. The Duke of Craine is the region's dominant lord, and his fiefdom is the largest between Caithness and Lake Acheron. A land of rolling plains and gentle rivers, the duchy is dotted with stands of pine, oak, and poplar. It is excellent country for livestock; cattle, buffalo, and sheep are common.

The duchy has been torn by war since its creation. The staging ground for Megalan invasions of al-Wazif, Craine has been besieged many times, most recently during the Frontier Wars. Occasionally the duchy has fallen under Muslim rule, only to be liberated by Imperial forces. A large minority of the peasants remember their Muslim roots, although very few actively practice Islam; those who are caught doing so are persecuted ruthlessly.

Prior to the Frontier Wars, Duke Bran, along with the Grand Master of New Jerusalem and the Archbishop of Raphael, repeatedly encouraged the Emperor to strike first against al-Wazif. They failed, but the wars validated their argument. Though the conflict ended with few changes to the map, Bran's prestige has risen further from its already lofty height.

Currently, he is rebuilding his strength. He believes there will be another war, but is unsure whether to prepare for it, try to replace Diophrates as Emperor, or seek independence for Western Megalos with himself as its king. Fortunately or not, he may actually have enough personal power to pull off that last. Meanwhile, he sends spies and agents south to al-Wazif and east to the capital.

Hyrnan

A quarter-century ago, Hyrnan was a small, prosperous duchy, covering the territory between Keyhole Bay and the Blackwoods. Then, in the early 1980s, Imperial tax collectors discovered that their official maps of

the forest were wrong. Instead of being a few dozen miles thick, it extended hundreds of miles toward Quartedec, covering territory shown on the maps as cultivated land. Some of the oldest residents of Hyrnan recalled the Blackwoods as being smaller; others were uncannily certain that nothing had changed.

Many adventurers set out to explore the woods; the very few who returned sane spoke of terror in the night. The Duke sent in soldiers. They didn't return at all. In 1987, the Emperor sent a full legion to clear the forest; less than one in 10 survived the initial foray.

The Emperor tried again five years later, sending a veritable army of woodcutters, guarded by another legion. This expedition simply began chopping down trees at the outskirts of the Blackwoods. They lasted a long time, but gradually disease, unprompted panic, and mysterious disappearances frightened away the civilians. By then, even the legionaries had severe morale problems, and the officers knew better than to order their men into the woods. The legion retreated, and the locals vowed to leave the forest alone.

Unfortunately, that vow was not enough. The Blackwoods visibly, unnaturally expanded over the next decade, to within a half-dozen miles of Hyrnan. The citizens tried not to look toward the trees, but everyone's nerves began to fray. Duke Tunstall Dubhagain pleaded for more help from the Emperor . . . and got it.

In 2002, a pair of legions, with five times the usual complement of battle mages, marched straight for the heart of the Blackwoods. They were met by the same threats as in previous forays: gigantic wolves, strange fevers, voices in the dark, and worse. However there were simply too many men to be dissuaded. Eventually the resistance melted away – and a day later, the legions marched into what was obviously an elven village of unusual size, very hastily deserted. They gathered scattered parchments and other evidence, burned every building, and marched back to Hyman. Their return was uneventful.

It was clear that the village had belonged to the infamous dark elves. The residents of Hyrnan now resent *all* elves, ignoring distinctions. The Emperor declared his great displeasure at the presence of hostile forces in the Empire's midst, but everyone agrees they will be incredibly difficult to root out. For the moment, the government has simply fortified Hyrnan with soldiers and mages.

The Secret of the Blackwoods

Megalos is certain the Blackwoods threat is the work of "dark elves"; most other elves agree, although any who enter the woods come to think that their brothers must have gone stark mad. The dark elves themselves, with their paranoid distrust of outsiders and evil reputation, find it impossible to make anyone believe the truth.

The shady, tangled Blackwoods have indeed long been a home to the shadowy offshoot of elvendom. This is where most of them retreated after the Bane went horribly wrong, and where many recent recruits, converted by human expansion and the deforestation of their homelands, have mustered. However, 30 or 40 years ago, this hideout became a trap.

Something appeared in the heart of the Blackwoods – perhaps wrought by another failed experiment or simply left there by a minor banestorm. No elf can understand it, though they know enough to hate it. There are a few relevant hints in the darkest myths of the people of Loren'dil, although most of those tales were forgotten centuries ago on Yrth.

The thing itself seems a great tree, though close up it is more a tangled thicket, its twisted branches, long creepers, and fungal growths black and dripping with slime. It is sentient, magically powerful, and relentlessly hostile. It can create or twist the shape of living things, direct them with its thoughts, and slowly, overwhelmingly warp reality. Its venom is forcing the Blackwoods to expand at the outer edges while the forest's center reshapes into something unpleasant to contemplate. While the unnatural menace appears not to be able to manipulate sapient beings, it may just be a matter of time.

New Jerusalem

West of Craine, New Jerusalem is a semi-autonomous region within Megalos, founded by the Knights Hospitaller (p. 62) shortly after they arrived on Yrth in 1187. A thorn in the Empire's side for many a year, it wasn't until 1350 that the Hospitallers agreed to join the Empire so their combined forces could destroy the infidels to the south. This unity lasted throughout the Crusades, but today the Hospitallers answer the Empire's call only if it suits them. They pay taxes as specified in the treaty, but have never sworn fealty and generally consider themselves independent. Most of the Megalan government regards this as a polite legal fiction.

The Grand Master of the Order controls the city and its surrounding lands. At the heart of the city stands the huge, gothic Grand Hospital, primary seat and spiritual center of the Order. New Jerusalem is prosperous; free peasants work the adjoining farms and there is strong trade on the River Conn. The Order also has a large treasury, full of money paid by the Emperor for services rendered.

During the Frontier Wars, the Hospitallers were instrumental in driving back the Wazifi invaders, and many now believe Megalos and the Hospitallers should push once more into Muslim territory. Sir Geoffrey Freeman, the Grand Master, in earlier years would have invaded whether Megalos agreed or not, but the last war made him wary. He constantly agitates for support while keeping his more radical knights on a tight leash.

Adventuring in New Jerusalem

As a nominally independent city founded by warrior priests, New Jerusalem is frequently on the knife-edge of war. As such, it is an ideal base of operations for a combat-oriented party. To be Hospitallers or work for them, members will have to be human or capable of passing as such, probably non-mages, and certainly Christian. The Hospitallers are conservative at best.

However, this intolerance does create adventuring possibilities for everyone who doesn't fit New Jerusalem's narrow concept of acceptable. The Hospitallers run a tight ship, but the city is too big for them to watch every corner. A traditionally eclectic band of characters can find work protecting people from the excesses of the city's rulers; they may even end up doing jobs "under the table" for practical and desperate Hospitallers.

Quartedec

The fief of Earl Hadrian of Quartedec stretches from the northern edge of the Blackwoods to the Emperor's Wall and the shores of Lake Styx. The earldom is famous for its horses, the best of which are descended from captured northern stock. Quartedec's rich, sometimes marshy grasslands are broken by pine forests. Perpetually swept by icy winds pouring down the mountains, the city is solidly if monotonously constructed.

Quartedec is the primary source of dwarven goods in Megalos. Traders from Zarak gather there to exchange weapons, armor, and jewelry for food and cloth. The city also boasts a community of dwarven smiths – one of the that race's rare permanent surface-dwelling settlements.

Not surprisingly, recent controversy in Quartedec has revolved around gold. The Baran River, which flows out of the Bronze Mountains into Lake Styx, is rich with it. When the humans first discovered the gold in the mid-1980s, they panned so much that its value dropped. The dwarves grumbled that the gold was rightfully theirs since it flowed out of their mountains. Thus, when the gold began to poison its owners, they were the first to be blamed. It turned out the "Curse of Black Gold" was the work of a wizard, hired by a local merchant who was being ruined by the price drop. The magic has since worn off; the gold is once again harmless.

The dwarves, however, remained concerned, and offered to *buy* the river from the fief in 1999. Since the river is important to local agriculture and the Earl has no authority to sell Megalan land, they were refused. They have renewed the offer each year, promising more money, asking for different rights, or using a less diplomatic tone. In addition, they have been furiously digging in the headwaters of the river, looking for the mother lode. In late 2004, however, they suddenly stopped, and began asking discreet questions about *Earth*. What they found is unknown.

Raphael

Southeast of Craine, the Archbishop of Raphael rules his city and a large part of the surrounding grasslands as a feudal lord. This is the youngest Archdiocese in Megalos, created in 1855 after the establishment of the current border between the Empire and al-Wazif. At least half the inhabitants of the region had Muslim grandparents, and although everyone in the city is now nominally Christian, Muslim villagers close to the al-Wazif border fiercely protect a few small mosques.

A young, vital city, Raphael supports itself through horse breeding and trade with al-Wazif. It was almost leveled during the Mages' War, but the survivors rebuilt, fortified, and survived the Frontier Wars in much better shape. Its outer walls are some of the thickest and tallest on the continent, visible for miles, rising sheer from the surrounding plains. Despite the inhabitants' slight paranoia, they justifiably feel ignored by the Emperor.

Yibyorak: The Goblin City

A fertile region situated on several trade routes, the duchy and city of Yibyorak are rich and getting richer. Duke Korobik usually leaves management of the city to its governor, preferring to oversee the rest of his duchy or visit the capital to curry favor. Yibyorak City itself is home to thousands of merchants and traders; money and goods are constantly changing hands.

History

Shortly after the initial Banestorm years, five clans of displaced goblins settled at the mouth of a river they named the Yvosek. Their settlement quickly grew into a town, then a small city. By 1175 Yibyorak was the capital of a goblin kingdom of the same name. The goblins fought fiercely when the Dragon encroached on their territory but became an Imperial duchy in 1229; the Emperor elevated one of their more compliant leaders to dukedom.

Over the centuries, Yibyorak has prospered in peace and suffered in war. Its harbor is less than 200 miles from al-Wazif, whose forces have blockaded it every war since Prince Ivor's Crusade. After these dramatic drops in trade, the people go back to stockpiling wealth in preparation for the next spasm of conflict.

Layout and Architecture

Yibyorak occupies both shores of the River Yvosek and all of Memanjik Island, a smooth spar of rock where the river opens to the sea. Memanjik is closer to the west bank and connects to it by several bridges, some sturdy, some rickety. The only link to the east bank is the Bajik Bridge, one of the most impressive engineering feats in Ytarria. Built of stone and thick, aged timbers, it is sturdy enough for a hundred full ox-carts, high enough for smaller vessels to pass underneath, and has a drawbridge in its center for

taller ships. Yibyorak has never had a complete city wall; it features several partial walls of varying ages. The city sprawls around and beyond them; it is said invaders are less likely to be dissuaded by Yibyorak's defenses than by its labyrinthine construction.

Megalan humans have determinedly tried to model Yibyorak on the capital, but much architecture is still distinctively goblin, tending to rounded towers of adobe, brick, and some granite. New buildings, construction sites, and temporary structures are very common – goblins like to try new things and have no qualms about knocking down old buildings. Most public places are built to human scale, but in primarily goblinish parts of the city, a tall human will feel cramped.

The River Yvosek is navigable by small boats all the way to Lake Acheron. Bigger ships must take the Ekmekyk Canal, which runs straight from the lake to join the Yvosek about 30 miles upstream from Yibyorak. The canal was completed in the early 1990s, and since then Yibyorak has pocketed an ever greater share of regional trade.

Adventuring in Yibyorak

A largely human band of wanderers won't attract *too* many stares here; the city is over one-third non-goblin, after all. Nevertheless, such visitors may feel rather more conspicuous than usual. GMs who plan to make Yibyorak central to their campaigns should encourage their players to consider goblin PCs.

That said, Yibyorak is a city where something is always happening, a great deal of it illegal. Most people are blind to considerations of color other than gold versus silver. Enterprising thieves and assassins can hunt down the Brothers of Mercury (p. 102) or set up a competing organization. Yibyorak is also a wonderful place to spend coin, haggle over loot values, or book passage for nearly anywhere else. As a merchant town, it's also the perfect spot to get robbed or swindled.

And, because goblins love magic and are fascinated by mages, the arcane members of the party will never have a dull moment . . .

Government

Yibyorak is ruled by duke-appointed Governor Taavjekii, aided by five lieutenant governors. Each assistant oversees a "demesne," a specific section of the city named for one of the original five founding clans: Bojich, Bricik, Kurnjaych, Memanjik, and Saratlik. Lieutenant governors are ostensibly descendants of the appropriate tribe, but actual succession is rarely hereditary and involves a lot of negotiating among the city's nobility. Below the Governors, the management of the city quickly devolves into a complex web of bureaucratic offices. Most important positions are filled via nepotism or bribes, though someone of demonstrated competence will find that cursory bribes will do.

Economics

The Yibyorak Merchant's Council naturally has a great deal of influence over city government. A council seat costs five Megalan pounds ($5,000) per year, and the councilor must own a fleet or business that employs at least 100 people. The Council freely manipulates the local guilds and effectively sets tariffs.

The strongest debates in the Council are between guild leaders who want a monopoly and customers who want to spend less. Those businesses most important to the city – merchants, shipwrights, and innkeepers, for example – have been controlled by two or more competing guilds for over a century, keeping costs lower. In less vital areas, the one existing guild is usually free to set high prices.

People of Yibyorak

Yibyorak is the largest city in Ytarria that is not predominantly human. Goblins make up over 60% of the population; another 30% are human, followed by halflings, dwarves, and assorted other races. Truly wild creatures like centaurs are rarely seen.

While heavily Christian, the city claims a substantial number of Muslims, both resident and transient. Most of them are either Wazifi merchants or descendants of merchants who decided to stay. Other religions are barely represented.

Because of the goblin fascination with magic, mages feel comfortable in Yibyorak, goblin mages doubly so. Goblins with minor magical talent are quite common; one or two can be found on any street. Powerful mages, goblin and otherwise, are popular public figures.

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Places of Interest

The Ducal Tower is not the tallest structure in Ytarria, but at 20 stories it looms over the city. Designed by Aralaise architects and sturdily constructed of gray stone, it combines goblin and Gothic styles in a way goblins love and other races find perplexing at best. The lowest levels are shops and restaurants, the middle floors offices, and the highest residential, mostly wizardly roosts. The very highest floor serves as the Duke's residence when he's in town. The top floors are accessible by stairs, but most people pay a staff wizard five farthings ($5) to be levitated through an interior shaft.

The Tower overlooks Covik Park, a large, landscaped area in the middle of Memanjik Island. The Park used to be a residential area, but after a fire devastated the city's center in 1864, the governor dedicated the land to greenery in memory of the dead. However, Covik Park is hard to keep manicured; a corps of groundskeepers battles to keep the more attractive plants healthy while preventing its total overgrowth by less welcome shrubs and bushes. All this cover makes it notoriously unsafe at night; the Brothers of Mercury make a point of not letting anyone through without "paying the park tax."

The economic core of Yibyorak is the Market, divided into the mostly private Goods Market and the public Common Market. The former, housed in what used to be a small arena, is a commodities exchange, the closest thing to a "stock market" in Ytarria's quasi-feudal economy. Rich merchants and their aides buy and sell goods on paper, settling up at day's end. A great deal of running and yelling accompanies everything here, though nobles get their servants to take care of such boorish mundanities – most of the time. The Common Market is a large network of streets crowded with shops and carts selling a thousand types of foodstuffs, livestock, cloth, and just about everything else. Arms and armor are available, but only on a few of the side streets, and more exotic goods such as enchanted items are nearly impossible to find. The Common Market is even louder than the Goods Market.

The Brothers of Mercury

Not surprisingly, Yibyorak is also a city of thieves. Its citizens regard their losses as the price of doing business. A "thieves' guild" (p. 51) called the Brothers of Mercury efficiently dominates the local underworld. As a token of membership, each Brother carries a copper coin normal to the casual glance but bearing the caduceus of Mercury on one side. Their loyalty is so great that they will die rather than betray each other. The highest-ranking Brothers are skillful enough to burgle supposedly impregnable homes right under the guards' noses.

The Brotherhood is currently moderating their activities so as not to drive too many people out of business. Nevertheless, a reward of 25 pennies ($100) for each Brother captured or killed, 10 pounds ($10,000) for the leader, has been on offer for years.

Shuuv'kopekk

The goblin wizard Shuuv'kopekk leads the Brothers. His identity is unknown to anyone except the cult's high priest, a human named Sulpicia, the mastermind's mouthpiece. Shuuv'kopekk uses magic to provide Mercury's "blessings" and collects offerings from members. He also uses his wizardry to choose targets, disable safeguards, and otherwise aid his thieves.

Most of the thieves of Yibyorak worship Mercury. Newer converts start out skeptical of the god's power, but all become believers eventually. Their complete loyalty comes from a record of success and wealth – and the knowledge that traitors are disemboweled.

Sulpicia in particular is apparently utterly loyal. When her predecessor, Diosthenes, got greedy, Shuuv'kopekk made her turn the fellow in for the 10-pound reward. The governor later reinstated the offer when it became clear the Brothers hadn't disbanded, but Diosthenes had already met an unpleasant fate at the hands of the authorities. Sulpicia understandably wishes she were in a less vulnerable position.

Araterre

The islands south of the Megalan mainland remained largely uninhabited until the 16th century, when a resurgence of the Banestorm imported thousands of Earth humans. When Megalos discovered them, the Empire sent expeditions to help the new arrivals acclimate – and to censor the knowledge they brought with them. After all remotely dangerous technology had been erased, the Megalans helped the islanders establish their own aristocracy – subject to the Emperor, of course.

The island-string Principality of Araterre stretches from Isle Entelle (formerly Ental Island) northward to Isle de Nord. On its southern border are the Ring Islands, a region of high mana, dangerous creatures, and strange events. Westward, across several hundred miles of open ocean, lies Cardiel. To the east is Bilit Island, fiercely independent of both Araterre and Megalos.

Geography

The islands of Araterre are similar in climate to southern Megalos but warmer and wetter. The larger islands have room to grow grain and raise cattle, and fishing is a major industry. Important cash crops include sugarcane, tea, grapes, and several spices and dyes. Sugar cane is also used to make rum.

The major islands have long since been deforested; only a few hunting preserves remain. Most land is under some kind of cultivation, save the southwestern coast of Isle Entelle, shunned because of its proximity to the mysterious Ring Islands.

Araterre is a normal-mana area except for the high-mana Ring Islands.

History

Before the 16th century, the southern islands could boast only three real human communities: Drift Abbey on Ental Island (later known as Isle Entelle), Mallory on Bartow Island (then and now a backwater town), and the strange, isolated population of Bilit Island. Then, in 1551, the first Aralaise arrived from Renaissance France. Over the next 50 years, they appeared in ever-increasing numbers, until the flow suddenly stopped. During this period, some major settlements were founded, but they had no unified government.

Soon, handpicked Megalan wizards and Church agents arrived to monitor the newcomers. Mages ensured that no one came to or left the archipelago without careful screening. In the meantime, they slowly installed an aristocracy loyal to the Emperor, elevating amenable Aralaise to high office while providing each with an "adviser."

Church inquisitors stamped out Protestantism, and placed carefully chosen puppets in the highest ecclesiastical offices. One order they could not stamp out, however, was the Society of Jesus, despite the fact that its attitudes and sophisticated post-Reformation theology frequently put it at odds with the Curia. Heavy-handed actions by the Megalan hierarchy led to the Jesuits briefly being declared heretical, while the Jesuits themselves were obstinate about not recognizing the authority of bishops out of communion with the pope. The common folk of Araterre, chafing under Megalan impositions, saw the Jesuits as heroic symbols of resistance.

The martyrdom of early Aralaise Jesuits served only to increase the order's popularity and resolve. Recognizing that they were losing too much, the Curia, after obtaining a few minor theological concessions, gave the Jesuits its full approval, and the Jesuits accepted its authority. The Society of Jesus then lost no time. By 1800, it was spread throughout Christendom. Later in the 19th century, Banestorm immigrants from Bali brought Hinduism to Araterre; as they also brought new and valuable crops, this was tolerated by the rulers of the time.

The Principality of Araterre was established on paper by the year 1625. It was not until 1644, however, that the region was officially opened to the world. Today, Araterre remains technically part of the Megalan Empire, but geography and technology conspire to make it all but independent. The Prince sends annual tribute to the Emperor, and lends the power of his

The Spice Trade

While spices are not the most important product of Araterre's agriculture by total value, they are the most glamorous. Weight for weight, they are certainly among the most valuable trade goods on Yrth, often more valuable than gold.

Among the commonest are cardamom, cinnamon, pepper, and ginger. Capsicums (chilies and "sweet peppers") and vanilla have been imported from Bilit Island (p. 108), although Aralaise growers have only recently learned how to cultivate the latter. *Graine'glace* is an Yrth-native plant with a "cool-tasting" seed. Some ferociously hot chilies can still only be acquired from Bilit, and some Megalan nobles claim to be very fond of these; eating one without showing pain is taken as a sign of manliness.

Spice cargos, along with a lot of sugar, are typically carried up the southwestern coast of Megalos, and traded to Megalan, Wazifi, and even Caithnesser merchants in Yibyorak. Because of this connection, a number of wealthy spice merchants are goblins, despite the fact that their senses of taste and smell are not quite like those of humans. Other traders sail to Araterre from all round Ytarria, often at great personal risk.

navy to Megalan military ventures, but otherwise rules the islands as his own. Still, a Megalan counselor is present in the Araliase court at all times, observing and advising. The current Prince is Arnod de Sauvons (p. 106) – not the worst ruler in Araliase history, but a trial to his counselor nonetheless.

Society

Araterre has a complete aristocracy, from the Prince down to petty local lords – titles and Status are the same as those for Megalos (p. 85). However, the nobility has relatively little actual power. The Prince is supported by taxes on both land and trade; lesser nobles, on the other hand, find themselves constantly under financial pressure, caught between increasing taxes, frozen rents paid by free farmers who grow many of the islands' cash crops, and a cultural aversion to commerce.

Aside from the Palace, the real powers are the Church, which controls the hearts and minds of the people, and the merchants, who control their pocketbooks. Only constant conflict keeps the two in balance; were they to unite, they could easily overpower the aristocracy. However, their interests are so disparate that this seems unlikely.

Technology

Despite Megalan efforts, the technology of Araterre is substantially higher than that found elsewhere in Yrth. It is fully TL4 in some fields, notably shipbuilding and sailing; local craftsmen also produce a few clever spring-powered gadgets. Only Araliase vessels are equipped with the complex rigging and navigational devices that make open ocean voyages practical. The fact that only the Araliase, living on isolated islands, really need such technology, and that they guard their secrets jealously, has kept their sailing techniques from being adopted in other lands.

Also, Araliase armourers can make fencing blades, which local warriors use to good effect (see box, above). Local engineers excel in the fields of architecture, plumbing and irrigation, and siege engines. All knowledge of gunpowder, however, was wiped out by the Megalan wizards . . . or so it appears.

Fencing

One technology for which Araterre is noted is fencing swordplay. Enough skilled smiths arrived through the Banestorm to preserve the techniques of manufacturing TL4 blades, and local fighting men retained the associated combat skills and a general swashbuckling style, later augmented by some South Asian techniques.

This makes sense in a subtropical maritime nation; heavy armor is infernally hot to wear, intolerably clumsy on shipboard – and fatal if one should end up in the water, even if one can swim. Hence, Araliase combat training emphasizes agility and mobility, for which light, fast blades are the best choice.

Rapiers are the most popular type of sword, although both sabers and smallswords are known. All three, and the skills to use them, may be acquired in any substantial town in Araterre. Elsewhere in Ytarria, only *cheap* fencing blades can generally be found; anything better will be an import or the product of a well-paid Araliase emigrant, and will cost at least double the usual price, and often a lot more (GM's option). Likewise, it would be hard for anyone who has not spent a long time in Araterre to acquire the related skills. Main-Gauche skill too is widely taught in Araterre, but largely unknown elsewhere. Some local daggers have wavy blades like the Asian *kris*.

In fact, Araliase "academies of arms" teach not only those weapon skills, but also Acrobatics and Cloak. The more practical schools *also* study heavier blades, to produce well-rounded fighters. Their students often seem to study Carousing and Sex Appeal, too. Advanced fencers may acquire techniques such as Disarming, Dual-Weapon Attack, Feint, Off-Hand Weapon Training, and Retain Weapon.

Nonhumans

No nonhumans are native to the islands, but goblin merchants are common in its cities, as are kobold gutter rats, and sea elves and merfolk in the local waters. There is little prejudice against nonhuman visitors; Araliase humans like to appear cosmopolitan, and most truly are.

Magic

In contrast to the sophistication of Araliase technology, local wizards are generally less skilled than their mainland counterparts. Araliase retain quiet but deep-seated misgivings about magic, dating back to the Megalan magical conquest. Though not repressed, the study of magic is not encouraged – except for churchmen. Most powerful Araliase mages are members of the Thomasite or Jesuit orders.

The Law

Araliase law is similar to that of Megalos, though formal courts with judges appointed by the local lord are more common. Araterre has many professional barristers, who argue cases before the courts for a fee. They participate only in civil matters, however.

Criminal cases, in which the condemned may be executed, maimed or enslaved, are still heard by the nobility. Only a noble of higher Status than the accused may sentence a man to death. Commoners are hanged; aristocrats are beheaded. Slavery, though legal, is less general than in mainland Megalos, whereas imprisonment is quite common.

The Fiefdoms

Araterre is divided up into feudal fiefs, some centered around towns or cities, some made up of one or more small islands with no community larger than a village. Feudal duties are appropriate to a maritime culture. A noble may be required to raise, not mounted knights, but one or more ships for his liege; indeed, most are better sailors than horsemen.

Sauvons

Sauvons is the political and cultural center of Araterre, and is considered by many to be the intellectual and artistic capital of Ytarria. It holds over half the population of Araterre within its sprawling boundaries, and boasts many buildings which are remarkable in their own right and fantastic by the standards of Megalos, including the Cathedrale de Saint Michel and the royal Palais de Sauvons. Its prestigious University attracts nobles' sons from all over the Empire. Scholars, courtiers, merchants and revolutionaries meet in cafes which serve Wazifi coffee and fabulously expensive Bilit Island chocolate, or in taverns which sell fine wines and potent rum. The city, and much of the population of the surrounding islands, is supported by large milkfish farms along the coast.

Dueling is a popular pastime among the rich youths of Sauvons. Many fencing academies are located here, so there is no lack of young hotheads for opponents. Dueling is, however, illegal within the city proper. To be found dueling by the clumsy city watch may be more amusing than dangerous; to encounter the *Sabreurs Royales* – the Prince's elite bodyguard – is quite another matter!

Light blades are preferred in duels; anyone who attempts to use a broadsword is considered crass. Wearing armor will earn the name of coward as well.

Drift Abbey

Drift Abbey was founded in the year 1175 by a group of Benedictine monks. Whether they journeyed from the mainland or were dropped here by the Banestorm is unknown, but they were the first to set foot on Isle Entelle. Later, when the Church sent

Maritime Technology

Aralaise ships are far and away the most sophisticated known in Ytarria, fully equal to late 16th-century Earth vessels (or even more advanced in some cases) and capable of true ocean voyages. Some designs show signs of Asian influence. Navigational technology has lapsed a little, but is still up to an early TL4 standard, and considerably enhanced by magic.

Ships typically have two or three masts, with one or two decks above the keel and a low "castle" at the stern; the largest warships have another such at the prow. These occasionally serve as platforms for heavy siege engines; light engines, basically oversized crossbows, are typically mounted along the side-rails. Magical waterproofing can keep these much more serviceable in ocean spray than they would be without; damp bowstrings don't work well and get people killed.

Even so, most engagements are settled by boarding. Pirates prefer this; an intact prize is much more valuable than one battered by missiles or magic. Hence, warships carry a varied mix of archers, crossbowmen, and melee troops. Even merchantmen often employ armed guards.

Names in Araterre

Aralaise naming mostly follows Megalan patterns (p. 88), save that the nobility do not borrow from Latin and all names have a strong, proud French flavor. Epithets referring to a place use the preposition "de" rather than "of" – hence "Arnod de Sauvons." When the place name begins with a vowel, this is abbreviated, as in "Remis d'Ansonne."

Typical male names include Aramis, Arnod, Bernard, Etienne, Guy, Henri, Jacques, Louis, Mathieu, Michel, Philippe, Raymonde, Thibod, Thierry, and Xavier. Women's names include Allisende, Anne, Bernadette, Danielle, Giselle, Jeanne, Lisette, Marie, Monique, and Sybille.

In some outlying regions, fragments of Asian naming systems survive. A first child will sometimes be called "Wayan" or "Putu" and a second "Made" or "Kadek," regardless of sex, in the Balinese tradition.

inquisitors to assure the proper spiritual development of the Aralaise newcomers, they made Drift Abbey their headquarters. It became the seat of the Archbishop of Araterre, though he rarely spends much time away from the intrigues of Sauvons.

The current Archbishop, Andrew of Hidelban, a Megalan appointee, is an exception. Archbishop Andrew is genuinely concerned with both spiritual and political matters across Araterre. He is a competent politician who is advised by his predecessor, the even more capable former Archbishop Jacques-Jude LeBlanc, now simply known as "Brother Jacques" since he retired to a small monastery. He keeps in touch with his successor through frequent letters.

It has not escaped the attention of Andrew and Jacques that, while both of them are members of the Benedictine Order, most of the local church hierarchy, including most bishops, are Jesuits. Both were told, when they were appointed by the Curia, that their job was to keep watch on these unreliable schemers. However, they now realize that the Curia could reduce the number of Jesuits appointed to positions of influence in Araterre if it wanted. They suspect that the Curia deliberately sets the two sides up as rivals, thereby ensuring that the notoriously independent Aralaise church will never unite enough to make trouble.

Meanwhile, they also have to deal with the wealthy merchants who have long held the Prince's ear. The stress of this drove the hard-working Jacques into early retirement; he would like to see his protégé do better. He feels his mistake was letting the Jesuits annoy him too much; he has convinced Andrew to focus on building power for the church as a whole and undermining the merchants . . . and to try to work *with* the Jesuits. It will be interesting to see how the Jesuits react.

Ansonne

Ansonne is Araterre's second greatest city. However, in the last 20 years, under the rule of Prince Arnod's younger brother, Duc Remis d'Ansonne, it has declined badly.

The blame is usually placed with a Wazifi merchant named Jafar as-Siyassi, previously Remis' chief adviser. Remis never showed much interest in governing, but left as-Siyassi to run the city for his own profit. The Wazifi was heavily involved in smuggling and illegality, and some assumed that he was an agent of Wazifi influence – a tactic which al-Wazif certainly used elsewhere. However, it is just as possible that he was simply out for himself. Wilder rumors made him a Hashishin, a diabolist, or a demon in disguise; Remis himself was known to dabble in black magic, albeit merely as a "shocking" hobby for a bored aristocrat, involving little more than hiring a few necromancers to produce bizarre effects at private parties.

When Megalos recently found itself at war with al-Wazif, Remis was obliged to dismiss as-Siyassi, but gave him plenty of warning to leave. Under Megalan pressure, the Prince investigated, and made his brother act a little more respectably for a while. Since the Frontier Wars ended, though, as-Siyassi has slipped back into the archipelago, and is almost certainly back in contact with the Duc, who is governing through favorites and hard-pressed clerks.

The main practical effect of this is that Ansonne has become a den of thieves and pirates, "the Wickedest City on Yrth," with as-Siyassi manipulating the local

The Prince of Araterre

Prince Arnod de Sauvons, lord of Araterre, seems pleasant and even capable enough to casual acquaintances. Fairly tall, in good condition for a man in his fifties, he is no orator, but displays considerable energy when something catches his interest.

Unfortunately, what usually catches his interest is not the business of government. He has one true love – and it is not his wife. The Prince is an avid hunter, with bow, hounds, or falcon, and at the very least goes riding every day. He also used to have a great love of beautiful young women, and still keeps two or three mistresses at any one time, but that is mostly for habit and companionship these days.

His wife, the Princess Acarie, used to be ferociously jealous (out of fear for her position rather than any romantic sentiment); rumor says that she may have poisoned at least one rival. Her friends deny this heatedly, though even they admit that she could be politically underhanded. Now, though, the couple has a son and heir, making Acarie's position more secure. She simply shrugs at Arnod's "romances," and even befriends some of the women. Unfortunately, young Francois is a sickly child; his parents keep several wizard-healers permanently on hand.

Dame Catherine "la Noire" (208 points)

Born the second daughter of an impoverished eastern Aralaise noble family, Catherine de Méliés traveled to Sauvons in search of fortune. There, her wit and charm caught the attention of Prince Arnod, and after the appropriate protestations and denials, she became a royal mistress, complete with a title and a luxurious life.

Unfortunately, having nurtured misguided hopes of more formal consideration before the young heir Francois came along, she proved less willing to follow the traditional script when the Prince grew tired of her. She declared that Arnod's very generous parting gift of money demeaned her, but nonetheless accepted it and returned to the eastern isles. There, she used the money, old family connections, and newer personal acquaintances to set herself up as a pirate.

She proved to possess a definite gift for naval command, and has acquired a very loyal crew. In fact, she now commands a small fleet, and is becoming known as a "pirate queen." She also delights in commissioning balladeers to compose deeply offensive and *personal* songs about the Prince.

While slight of build and not dazzlingly beautiful, Catherine has distinctly exotic looks, combining blonde hair with "Asian" features. Her clothes are always expensive but practical, and her force of personality is considerable. If obliged to fight in melee, she wields her blades defensively while waiting for her men to assist.

ST 9 [-10]; **DX** 11 [20]; **IQ** 12 [40]; **HT** 12 [20].
Damage 1d-2/1d-1; BL 16 lbs.; HP 9 [0]; Will 12 [0]; Per 12 [0]; FP 12 [0].
Basic Speed 6.00 [5]; Basic Move 6 [0]; Dodge 9; Parry 10.

Social Background

TL: 4 [5]
CF: Christian region [0].
Languages: Aralaise (Native/Native) [0]; Latin (Broken/Accented) [3]; Old Aralaise (Accented/Broken) [3].

Advantages

Appearance (Attractive) [4]; Born War-Leader 3 (p. 184) [15]; Charisma 2 [10]; Contact Group (Eastern Isles underworld; Skill-12; 12 or less; Somewhat reliable) [10]; Contact Group (Old friends in high society; Skill-15; 9 or less; Somewhat reliable) [10]; Enhanced Parry (Smallsword) [5]; Luck [15]; Reputation +2 (As a glamorous rebel; Among anti-establishment Aralaise; All the time) [3]; Status 2* [5]; Wealth (Filthy Rich) [50].

Disadvantages

Enemies (Aralaise pirate-hunters; Hunter; 9 or less) [-30]; Overconfidence (15) [-2]; Reputation -2 (As a bloody pirate; Among Aralaise law enforcers; All the time) [-3]; Reputation -2 (As a loose woman; Among very respectable Aralaise; All the time) [-3]; Selfish (9) [-7]; Social Stigma (Known Criminal) [-5].

Quirks: Assumes that women who look better than her are stupid; Has sworn to publicly humiliate both Arnod and his wife one day; Likes extremely bawdy songs; Loves humiliating the Prince's Navy; Reacts violently to any suggestion that her hair is a wig. [-5]

Skills

Area Knowledge (The Eastern Isles)-14 (IQ+2) [4]; Brawling-12 (DX+1) [2]; Carousing-12 (HT+0) [1]; Cartography-11 (IQ-1) [1]; Connoisseur (Music)-12 (IQ+0) [2]; Crossbow-12 (DX+1) [2]; Current Affairs/TL4 (Eastern Isles)-12 (IQ+0) [1]; Current Affairs/TL4 (Headline News)-12 (IQ+0) [1]; Current Affairs/TL4 (Popular Culture)-12 (IQ+0) [1]; Dancing-10 (DX-1) [1]; Erotic Art-10 (DX-1) [1]; Heraldry-11 (IQ-1) [1]; Knife-11 (DX+0) [1]; Leadership-16 (IQ+4) [1]†; Makeup-12 (IQ+0) [1]; Musical Instrument (Harpsichord)-10 (IQ-2) [1]; Navigation/TL4 (Sea)-11 (IQ-1) [1]; Riding (Horse) -10 (DX-1) [1]; Savoir-Faire (High Society)-13 (IQ+1) [2]; Seamanship/TL4-12 (IQ+0) [1]; Sewing-11 (DX+0) [1]; Sex Appeal-14 (HT+2) [4]‡; Shiphandling/TL4 (Ship)-11 (IQ-1) [2]; Smallsword-12 (DX+1) [4]; Smuggling-12 (IQ+0) [2]; Strategy (Naval)-13 (IQ+1) [1]§; Tactics-15 (IQ+3) [4]§.

* One level free from Wealth.
† +3 from Born War-Leader, +2 from Charisma.
‡ +1 from Appearance.
§ +3 from Born War-Leader.

underworld and possibly running a Wazifi spy network. Eventually, *someone* is going to have to clean the place out.

The Ring Islands

The Ring Islands lie southwest of Isle Entelle. Although few people know it, these are the remnants of two huge ancient meteorite craters. All of the islands are heavily wooded, and the southern ones hold the only rainforests known to the folk of Ytarria. The Ring Islands are completely wild; except for a few scattered pirate havens, intelligent races shun them.

One reason is that they are notoriously infested with ferocious monsters. Moreover, in some areas, the high local mana is *aspected*, giving a bonus to skill with some types of spells (such as necromantic or fire magics) and an equal penalty to the opposite type (such as healing or water spells); see ***GURPS Magic*** for more about this. The aspect may change radically from one place to the next, for no apparent reason. This has

caused many forms of wildlife to develop magical properties; some exist only in one tiny area.

Among the bizarre and dangerous creatures living in the islands' forests are an acid-breathing species of dragon (use the Hatchling, Young, or Adolescent Dragon templates on p. 227, but replace the breath weapon with a Corrosive Innate Attack with the Jet enhancement), a tiger-like cat whose hide magically changes to match its surroundings (use the lion from p. B456, adding several levels of Chameleon), and a carnivorous flying mammal of uncertain size that stuns its prey with its shrill screech (use any interesting predator as the base, adding Winged Flight and an Affliction which causes an Attribute Penalty to DX and also Stunning, with the Cone enhancement). The local waters are said to harbor sea serpents, and the islands are also home to many "normal" animals unknown elsewhere on Ytarria, including apes, crocodiles, and large snakes.

Bilit Island

Bilit Island lies 300 miles to the east of Sauvons. The folk of this large, well-forested, partly volcanic isle have remained independent of Megalos, despite repeated invasions. Their ferocity has earned the island not only independence, but a dire reputation. Old sailors and legionaries boast of *surviving* a Bilit campaign, not of battles won.

The natives are not the descendants of Europeans, but rather of Mayan and Toltec Indians. There are a half-dozen cities on the island, each ruled by a warrior-king. They are in constant conflict; their wars are characterized by ever-shifting alliances. But whenever the threat of outside invasion arises, the city-states set aside their feuding. Their religion is as unnerving to outsiders as their ferocity in battle; see p. 78.

Local mana levels are variable and occasionally unstable, but mostly normal or high; the local priests include some competent wizards who deal well with the mana fluctuations. There is also evidence that Megalan stories of demon worship and inhuman powers from beyond the stars aren't all excuses made by fleeing cowards.

Adventuring in the Isles

Araterre is a region for games of swashbuckling quests. Adventurers of a mercantile bent can trade in spices and gems while fending off pirates. Characters who wish to travel much will need maritime skills, or at least a ship with a trustworthy crew. There are enough small islands and hidden bays that skilled sailors can easily evade enemies, including the authorities. Local society is colorful and flamboyant, with plenty of politics and intrigue, especially in the capital.

There is also opportunity for grand schemes and dreams of rebellion. While Araterre has enough functional independence to prevent the growth of a serious revolutionary movement, the Empire is just oppressive enough to inspire grumbling and resentment. As Ytarria's most technologically advanced land, with plenty of hiding-places, Araterre is also a hotbed of underground engineers (p. 30), leading to occasional clashes between swashbuckling philosophers and foreign wizards.

PCs may also wish to visit the Ring Islands to hide from enemies or hunt down rash pirates or exotic beasts. There are also rumors that the Jesuits have a hidden mission on the large island in the center of the eastern ring. What goes on there, if it exists, is equally mysterious, but the Curia or the Emperor, among others, would pay well to know.

Furthermore, Bilit Island is infested with strange wildlife, including huge reptiles and other monsters. Many of these seem to be unique. Whether they are brought by the Banestorm or malevolent demons, products of the sometimes strange local mana, or left over from some pre-human age of Yrthian magic, is unclear. Apart from the danger they represent, they make the islanders prone to paranoia and superstition. The fact that paranoia is justified towards Megalos is just luck.

The island was discovered in the 18th century, and shortly afterwards, Megalos launched its first invasion attempt. Every few decades ever since, some ambitious noble or general has declared the intention of destroying the "heathen cannibal-cults" of Bilit and bringing the island into the Empire. The results have always been the same. A *really* well-supported effort might succeed, at fabulous cost – 300 miles of ocean is a long way to transport troops and supplies – but the Empire has never seen enough profit in the idea.

In war, the TL1 islanders wield bronze clubs and swords and obsidian-tipped spears and arrows. They do not make weapons and tools of iron or steel, but prize those they gain through capture or trade. None of the major nonhuman races are represented on Bilit Island, though some of the monsters show uncanny intelligence. Nonhuman visitors are rare, and likely to be seen as curiosities, demons, or divine messengers; all three possibilities are dangerous. Towns and villages on the island are *always* surrounded by strong wooden stockades or dense, carefully cultivated barriers of growing thorns, to protect against invaders and local wildlife.

A few merchants make a profit trading with the island. Jade, obsidian, and precious stones can be found here, as can exotic hides, furs, and feathers, fine woods such as mahogany, unique spices, and the rare and valuable *chocolate*. Most important, however, are the large gold deposits in the central hills – the only major source in Ytarria not controlled by dwarves. Traders come to the island to barter steel weapons, wines, and other mainland goods. Given the islanders' intricate taboos and rampant paranoia, this can be almost as dangerous as attempting conquest.

PCs could easily find jobs as guards with such expeditions. They might decide to try to steal the riches of a city or mine, but they had better have a way to get off the island quickly. A very few adventurers have lived among the islanders and learned their language; one or two have even become lords. Many others have died in the attempt.

Caithness

The youngest of Ytarria's kingdoms, Caithness is sparsely populated, underdeveloped, and wracked by civil war. In truth, the "kingdom" today is little more than a handful of feuding baronies scattered across hundreds of miles of nearly empty territory.

Because they live so far apart, Caithness' nobles have enjoyed great autonomy. Historically, their loyalties have been held by a series of strong rulers. Matters have gone downhill. The current king, 35-year-old Conall VI, came to the throne too young. In the early years of his reign, many lords paid little attention to matters outside their own lands, enjoying the lack of oversight. Ten years ago, this disregard grew into unrest and then outright rebellion. Today, Conall is fighting to reunite his kingdom.

Geography

Caithness is bordered by the Great Forest to the south, Megalos to the east, the mountains of Zarak to the north, and the Great Desert on the west. By treaty, which the Megalans violate every few years with a minor invasion, the Caithness-Megalos border is set where the mana level drops from normal to low. Because of the poor soil and climate – and the occasional invasion – these borderlands are mostly uninhabited. Caithness also borders al-Haz and al-Wazif, but thanks to the badlands and the Great Forest, those areas remain largely unexplored and quite poorly mapped; there is no reason to care exactly where the borders lie.

Rolling plains dominate Caithness, broken by frequent woods and a few deep forests. Most of its rainfall comes as storms from the western or southern oceans, which somehow sweep right over the coastal wastelands and mountains before depositing their rain inland. Caithness is noticeably damper than the lands to the east.

History

Megalans settled Caithness about 200 years ago. The region was ideal for colonization, except for two minor problems: not enough mana, and too many orcs. But in 1784, the third son of the Duke of Craine organized a colonial effort. Conall was an intelligent, ambitious young man who saw little future for himself within Megalos, and recruited a band of similar-minded settlers.

During their first few years in Caithness, the settlers spent more time fighting orcs than building or farming. Twice before 1790, they were almost forced back into Megalos. Gradually, however, they pushed west. By 1800, they had established the keep of Redhall, and the small town around it was self-sufficient. By 1812, they had driven the orcs to the edge of the Great Desert. Exhausted and demoralized, the orc-chieftains led their tribes across the wastes, leaving Caithness to the humans.

The years that followed were a period of peaceful building and growth, as more settlers (human and halfling) moved in. In 1822, the Emperor summoned Conall to the Imperial capital. There, the court officially extended the Imperial borders to include the County of Caithness, and made Conall its first Earl.

However, the now-flourishing Caithness was not long a Megalan county. In 1826, Conall declared independence, and was crowned King Conall by his friend and confessor, Archbishop Constantine of Clixtus. Soon afterward, Constantine accurately denounced the Curia as corrupt, saying that it had no authority over Caithness. Thus, Caithness became politically and spiritually independent.

Neither the Emperor nor the Curia accepted this, and within the year, the legions were on the march. In New Jerusalem, the Hospitallers, who considered the invasion a crusade against heretics, joined them. Fortunately for Caithness, the legions' battle-mages could not adjust to mana-poor Caithness, particularly when faced with acclimated local wizards. The legions were demoralized by the smaller but determined Caithness armies, and withdrew. The Hospitallers, though less dependent on magic, were left without support, and retreated as well.

Over the next two decades, necessity forced the Empire to accept Caithness' sovereignty. Trade between Caithness and Megalos resumed and grew. In 1844, Constantine's successor, Giles of Fordham, met with the Curia. They announced that they had resolved the differences between the two churches, and Caithness' Church reunited with that of Megalos.

For the past 180-odd years, the descendants of Conall I have ruled from their lording, Carrick. In recent years, however, Caithness' unity has collapsed. In 1975, King Morill III died, leaving his six-year-old son Conall as heir. Although his mother, Queen Alys, served as regent and made energetic but unskilled efforts to defend his position, the power of the throne declined over the next decade. Many nobles ignored the young prince entirely. Regional lords warred among themselves, and few sent their proper taxes to Carrick. When Megalos invaded in 1982, individual lordings had to turn the invasion back without royal aid. They succeeded, but it was a costly victory.

Conall VI was crowned in 1985, at the age of 16. The nobility, by and large, was unimpressed. Over the next decade, Conall attempted to reassert royal authority, with limited success.

In 1994, refugees from Castle Defiant, a human stronghold in the southeast Orclands, convinced Conall to send aid across the desert. Their situation had become precarious, and

The Silver Hand

The Hand acts as the king's eyes and ears, both within Caithness and abroad. The idea of spies in their courts makes many of Caithness' nobles uneasy, but those faithful to Conall trust in the Hand's loyalty to the Crown. The rebels refer to the Hand as the king's assassins; its existence is a rallying point for their cause.

Individual Hands are smart, well-trained, and very independent. Their numbers are small, and agents must be able to take care of themselves. Most have a conventional occupation which also serves as a cover, such as merchant or knight-errant. See p. 217 for applying this lens to a player character.

It is sparsely populated, even in the well-settled north. Towns are small and far apart; barely a score of communities can be termed cities. Roads are well-marked dirt or gravel tracks; maintenance is sporadic and bridges are frequently washed out.

Most of Caithness' trade moves along two rivers: the upper Conn and the Smoke. Since both of these flow into Megalos, the Empire is by far Caithness' most important trading partner. In times of war, Caithness' merchants suffer. Trade between northern and southern Caithness mostly has to pass along the rivers and through Craine, at considerable cost, but the trade enriches Craine and wins allies there.

Major crops include wheat, rye, barley, lightbush seed (see p. 94) and honeyroot, an Ytarrian vegetable whose root has a high sugar content. The kingdom is well known for its beers and liquors; Sterling Gold and Redhall Red are traded as far away as the Imperial capital, at premium prices. Wine, on the other hand, is rare and costly; the climate is too chilly for grapes. To be served wine in Caithness is a great honor, and requires a properly appreciative response.

the refugees insisted that without aid Defiant would be overrun by orcs within months. Conall acquiesced, and led the expedition personally.

This was the opportunity Lord Deneral of Mershall had been waiting for. Deneral had opposed Conall for decades, and their forces had clashed repeatedly. Believing Carrick undefended, Deneral attacked, intending to add it to his own lands, and to leave the King without a castle.

Unfortunately for him, Conall had expected treachery. The garrison he left behind was the best of his people, including most of the Knights of the Stone. Further, he had arranged for constant magical communication. He promptly headed back to Carrick, having gone no further than the lording of Wallace. Aided by allies from Tacitus, he crushed Deneral's forces. Deneral himself escaped to Sterling.

Conall proceeded to incorporate Mershall into Carrick. Resistance within Mershall was firmly put down. In a few cases, Conall's men were *too* firm; Deneral's agents exaggerated these incidents into systematic brutality. Meanwhile, in Wallace, the Castle Defiant refugees believed that Conall had exploited their plight to draw out Deneral, and had never intended to help their kin across the desert. In truth, Conall had planned to send a second expedition when things calmed down, but he never got the chance. While he was still pacifying Mershall, a last band of refugees reported that Defiant had fallen.

The next few years were increasingly chaotic; the lords of Sterling and Oakwood died in rapid succession, and their heirs were far less loyal to Conall. In 1999, Conall publicly rebuked Lord Marsden of Donlis for profiting from river piracy, and imposed a steep tax increase. Deneral, still in exile in Sterling, used this as a rallying cry for the rebellious lordings, and began what is commonly known as the Sterling Rebellion, or the Caithness Civil War, which continues to this day.

Wartime Complications

Civil wars expose all the quirks in a feudal system. Knights or nobles on either side may have lordings in enemy territory; some may even owe feudal loyalties to both factions. It is even possible for a great lord to have a secondary holding that makes him theoretically the vassal of an "inferior." Some people join a side just to get out of feudal obligations to the other; others take the opportunity to settle old scores. Loyalties are rarely clear, and leaders have to examine the motives of their own followers – at the risk of causing grave insult. This sort of thing has become commonplace in Caithness.

Society

Caithness society is straightforwardly feudal, and more tolerant than that of Megalos. The frontier mentality is strong; competence and self-reliance are valued, while pomp and pretense are scorned. The lord who gets his hands dirty commands more respect than the noble who sips wine while his peasants toil.

There is a definite strain of machismo, too. Pastimes like hunting, horse-breaking, falconry, and dog-breeding are respected over artistic pursuits like painting and sculpting. Dances in Caithness tend to be foot-stomping reels, not the stately pavanes of Megalos.

Women are generally welcome in every pursuit. Hawking is particularly popular among noblewomen without being considered effeminate. However, ladies who pursue traditionally feminine activities (e.g., needlework) are also valued as the flowers of culture in a harsh land.

Caithnessers view Megalan society as pretentious and decadent. Megalan nobles therefore have a negative Reputation (-1; As pompous; Among Caithnessers, a large group in campaigns involving Caithness; All the time). Only the most famous of Megalan knights overcome this. Megalan merchants are usually distrusted, and have a similar Reputation (-1; As deceitful and conniving; Among Caithnessers; All the time) until they've established a working relationship. Due to the strength of the Church in Caithness, Muslims, Jews, and human pagans have the Social Stigma (Minority Group) disadvantage.

Social Status

Caithness uses the same system of rank and titles as Megalos (see p. 87), but the King and Queen are Status 7; they are addressed as "Royal Majesty" or just "Majesty," their offspring as "Royal Highness."

Unlike Megalos, Caithness offers ample opportunity for social advancement. A story of a slave becoming King would be an unlikely epic, but many worthy Caithnessers have risen at least one rung on the social ladder. And it works both ways: "If Young Jack be not worthy, Old Jack can hang." In other words, deeds are more important than breeding.

There are many ways for people to advance. A slave or serf might perform some great service and be freed by his master, or he might flee and change his name, gaining a Secret and probably an Enemy. A freeman might distinguish himself with administrative ability and be appointed town mayor, or pursue a military career, becoming a captain. A brilliant reputation as a merchant can bring wealth and some status though no title. A mayor or captain who serves his lord during a crisis might be made governor of a lording. This can also be achieved by leading a successful settlement expedition into an undeveloped portion of the lord's fiefdom.

Any free person of Caithness, including nonhumans, may be knighted by the king, a landed knight, or a senior Knight of the Stone, becoming an "unlanded" knight. This can be a reward for extreme bravery or skill on the battlefield, or the result of years of training as a squire. Squires are usually chosen from the nobility, but promising commoners can also become squires, especially under unlanded knights or Knights of the Stone.

To gain a position higher than unlanded knight or minor lord, a person must acquire lands and persuade

Names in Caithness

Caithness parents typically follow the customs of their Megalan ancestors (p. 88) when naming children. However, fanciful names sometimes occur . . . resurrected from old tales, or just invented . . . particularly among noble families. Examples include Aylara, Bandellan, Galardon, Pinetall, Renown, Torrion, and Vulnavia. These names become common if they sound good, especially if the holder becomes admired. For instance, Peredur of Durham, famed as Peredur Orcslayer, was the first on Yrth to bear that name, but Peredur is now a common name, particularly among those born immediately after his death in 1989.

the King to recognize him. In other words, the King must believe that he is worthy to be a ruling noble. This requires faithful service and an oath of fealty to the crown. Often, the lord of the parent lording will resist the separation of the territory. To become a baron or higher, one must either marry the baronial heir, step into the power vacuum left when a baron and his heirs are killed (and hope the King recognizes one's worthiness), or be the lord of a fief which has grown enough to deserve baronial rank.

Women in Caithness

Because Caithnessers respect ability, the kingdom offers greater opportunity for women than any other land in Ytarria. An early shortage of nobles established the precedent that a female heir could inherit lands and title in the absence of a male. Further, if a father dies, leaving a minor son as heir, the boy's mother can rule as regent until he reaches 16.

Caithness' women entered the chivalry in 1934, with the knighthood of Dame Devin of Fordham. As Lady of Fordham, Devin personally led her forces against the Megalan legions in 1932. In honor of her victories, King Cerdic II knighted her. Most of the chivalry ignored this; Cerdic was considered rather eccentric.

Despite this, Devin became a heroine for Caithness' young noblewomen. Many appealed to her to take them as squires. Devin eventually accepted Lady Teress of Durham into her service. Teress trained intensely; within four years, she was besting male squires afoot and on horseback, and was a model of courtly graces. However, Devin could find no knight willing to grant Teress' spurs, and she would not weaken Teress' claim by doing it herself. Though it is possible to knight one's own squire, it is traditional in Caithness for this to be done by a "disinterested" third party.

Another two years passed until Sir Trent Longoak, Grand Master of the Order of the Stone, visited Fordham. Sir Trent was thoroughly impressed by Teress, and knighted her soon thereafter, making her the first female Knight of the Stone.

Dame Teress' knighthood, conferred by a respected Grand Master, gave credibility to the notion of female knights. Within a decade, there were a dozen knighted ladies in Caithness. Today women knights are increasingly common; about one in five Knights of the Stone is a woman. Among more traditional knights, women are only one in 10, and the Dragons – a religious as well as a chivalric order – remain exclusively male.

Nonhumans in Caithness

Nonhumans are less common in Caithness than in Megalos. Only elves and halflings have established communities. Members of other races – chiefly expatriate dwarven craftsmen – live individually or as families in the larger towns. Dwarven traders are common in the north, and goblin merchants from Megalos do regular business along the Conn and Smoke, but they seldom stay long. Reptile men and orcs are dangerous barbarians to Caithnessers, and likely to be lynched unless vouched for by someone trusted.

Elves are accepted by human Caithnessers, who think of them as skinny, rustic humans with pointed ears. They have communities in many deeper woods, notably the Great Forest and the woods east of Sterling. Many are far older than any human settlement, and some do not recognize any human authority. The elves were quite capable of defending themselves against the orcs that once dominated the region, and are ready to defend themselves again, if necessary.

Halflings immigrated from Megalos after the humans had driven out the orcs. They seldom live in human towns, preferring their own small farming villages. This distances them from their human neighbors, but they are still gracious to visitors. They are explicitly considered citizens, and expected to pay their taxes. They are, on the whole, well thought of, law-abiding, productive people who enjoy a good beer at the end of the day.

Nonhumans legally have all the rights of humans in Caithness, though non-Christians will suffer the same stigma as human non-believers. Most nonhumans in Caithness can speak Anglish, with the exception of invading reptile men and orcs.

Magic in Caithness

Most wizards avoid Caithness, believing it to be mana-barren. This is largely accurate, but it does have small, scattered areas of normal-to-high mana. Few are more than a mile across; some are much smaller. Almost all are already occupied by wizards. They are both skilled and powerful, partly so that they can cast spells in the rest of Caithness, but also because weak wizards can't defend a hotspot from competitors. Those wizards not powerful enough to own a hotspot sometimes serve as aides or apprentices to those who are. Others leave Caithness, becoming stronger in other lands.

A few wizards have determined that the hotspots are produced by chunks of iron deep in the ground. One or two, up to date on Earth science, conjecture that they are a kind of meteor. All of them keep their source of power secret. This iron has never been extracted in quantities sufficient to study properly; it might be used to make items of great power –

or moving and working it might disrupt its qualities. Most wizards prefer not to risk the advantages it provides in place.

Caithness mages usually stay in their towers, conducting experiments and contemplating thaumatological philosophy. They pay tribute to the local lord, or directly to the king. The tribute is nominal; the lords recognize their value. The wizards appreciate this tolerance and freedom, and have been instrumental in turning back Imperial invasions. They have a significant advantage over visiting sorcerers, being used to the low mana. Also, Caithness mages are better-equipped than their foreign rivals, since magic items must be more powerful to work here.

Those mages who have an opinion on the Civil War are mostly royalists. Conall was friendly with the mages in Carrick before the war, and seems to be a force for stability, which is all these wizards want from their government. However, many remain neutral, or actively *distracted*. Over the past 15 years, the low-mana to normal-mana border with Megalos has crept 50 miles to the southwest. This has had little political effect – those lands were barely inhabited – but the mages are ambivalent about Caithness becoming more magical.

Caithnessers in general believe in magic, though a significant percentage of the population has never seen a spell being cast. Any town with more than 500 people is likely to have at least one minor wizard; cities often have a few genuinely competent ones.

The Law

Caithness law follows the pattern of Megalos, though it is less severe. Cases are heard in public by the regional lord. Though trial by jury is unheard of, the lord's decision is usually influenced by the sentiments of the crowd. Getting caught bribing the crowd is *not* a good idea. The use of magic in determining guilt is rarely suggested, and even less often approved.

Caithness justice places an emphasis on compensating the victims or their families. For this reason, fines are the most common form of punishment, and are often quite large. Criminals who cannot pay (by selling goods, appealing to relatives, or selling years of service) are sold to the Crown as slaves, at half the usual price. The victim's compensation then comes from the proceeds. The regional lord disposes of any remaining money, typically by dividing it between the barony, the lord presiding over the trial, and the people who apprehended the criminal.

Slavery

Slaves are rare in Caithness compared to other lands. Criminals who are the property of the King may end up maintaining royal highways or fortifications, reducing the need for peasant levies in royal domains, or engaged in profitable work to cover the cost to the crown of buying them. It is illegal for private citizens to own slaves-by-law; most privately-owned slaves are slaves by capture (e.g., former orc raiders) or by choice.

Adventuring in Caithness

Many adventures in Caithness can be built around the Civil War. Both sides are hiring mercenaries and spies, and the fate of the kingdom may be determined by a battle, an assassination, or a particularly adept bit of diplomacy. Players will probably prefer to side with the high-minded young king, who has law and tradition on his side, but the rebels can argue that he's dangerously indecisive and, much worse, dangerously enamored of Megalan-style autocracy. Reuniting the country, or freeing the lords to rule as they wish, could easily be a whole campaign.

Caithness is also suitable for "Arthurian" adventures, with questing knights, tourneys, enigmatic wizards in towers, and courtly intrigue. Chivalry is alive here, albeit moderated by greater equality between the sexes and a little cynicism.

GMs of such games should consider how many fantastic elements to include. Caithness definitely has magic, elves, dwarves, and monsters, but they can be shuffled into the background if the GM wants to run a game with a more "historical" feel.

The Civil War

Of the lordings in Caithness, all but three have chosen a side in the Civil War. Backing King Conall VI are the lords of Deerwood, Durham, Fordham, Redhall, and Tacitus. Dame Lorena of Deerwood, Lord Berd of Fordham, and Baron Elohar of Tacitus are personally fond of the king, but Baroness Bronwyn of Durham hasn't warmed to him, and Lord Lathan of Redhall is only loyal as a matter of principle.

The rebels are the lords of Denton, Donlis, Ferrier, Oakwood, Sterling, and Wallace. The core members are Brance of Oakwood and Towne of Sterling; both count Deneral as a friend. Anger about the king's actions against Lord Marsden of Donlis were the pretext for the war, but Marsden himself is rather half-hearted about it, though he certainly wants to be independent of the crown, as does Baron Nabbick of Ferrier. Baron Cabble of Denton's sole motive is his desire to grab territory in the confusion. Lord William of Wallace, on the other hand, genuinely feels that Conall is a bad king.

The Church in Photius remains officially neutral, but privately Archbishop Siccius favors Conall. Also neutral are the lordings of Blythe and Harkwood – one effectively destroyed, one occupied by elves – and Simonton, whose lord has simply refused to participate. Among nonhumans, the elves are *adamantly* neutral. The Zarakun favor the king; they respect tradition and strong authority, and he's a good trading partner. This favor hasn't yet extended to actual military support. The halflings of Caithness are typically loyal to their local lord; they make poor soldiers but excellent spies.

Over the past few years the war has been cold as often as hot; months and even years can pass in virtual truce. It began with a few attacks and counter-attacks, mostly between Sterling and

King Conall VI (303 points)

Conall is an intelligent and charismatic king, but faces even cannier enemies. His few missteps have resulted in a divided kingdom, and he is determined to unite Caithness once again.

His only distraction is his love for Baroness Bronwyn of Durham – a love not currently returned. His infatuation dates back to the celebration after he made her a Baroness. She was newly-married at the time, and since her husband's death, he has never found the right moment.

His advisors are exasperated by his failure to marry, though fortunately he has a loyal and competent young cousin, Sir Bereford, as his undisputed heir. One or two of them have guessed his reason. Others use his single status as a diplomatic bargaining counter, dangling it before various barons with unmarried daughters. Conall tells those who bother him about it that the war is too great a distraction for now.

In games, Conall can be depicted as a romantic who wants the best for his people and has focused most of his personality into the kingdom; it's his job, main hobby, and personal life, and perhaps it makes him a little dull. He *has* to work hard, as his vaunted intelligence and charisma are actually relatively modest. He can equally be seen as somewhat dense – at least in personal matters – but good-hearted, needing some benevolent guidance (say, from PCs) to loosen up and apply his genuine charm a little more effectively. But then, some would call him an emotionally constipated control freak, determined to supervise every scrap of *his* kingdom. These views are not incompatible; friends, allies, and enemies see different sides to Conall.

Note: Conall's Independent Income represents reliable rents, feudal dues, etc., from personal estates; he *also* has a job (King of Caithness) which provides an income appropriate to his wealth level. As a king, he is Status 7, but because he is fighting a civil war in his own kingdom, his income is only actually sufficient to support a Status 6 lifestyle. This doesn't reduce his effective Status at present – both his supporters and other monarchs recognize his title – but it does make him feel a pressing need to regain control of the entire country.

Conall's Code of Honor is much like the Gentleman's Code or Chivalry, except that it allows and even encourages him to avoid endangering himself for personal reasons; he is responsible for his kingdom, after all. He will keep to the letter of his word, seek redress for insults, and protect the weak (especially if they are Caithnessers), but rather than fighting personally, he can order his guards to act or appoint a royal champion (who may well be *very* tough).

ST 12 [20]; **DX** 11 [20]; **IQ** 11 [20]; **HT** 11 [10].
Damage 1d-1/1d+2; BL 29 lbs.; HP 13 [2]; Will 11 [0]; Per 11 [0]; FP 12 [3].
Basic Speed 5.5 [0]; Basic Move 6 [5]; Dodge 8; Parry 9; Block 9.

Social Background

TL: 3 [0].
CF: Christian region [0].
Languages: Anglish (Native/Native) [0]; Latin (Broken/Accented) [3]; Elvish (Broken/None) [1].

Advantages

Appearance (Attractive) [4]; Charisma 1 [5]; Claim to Hospitality (Loyal nobility) [5]; Fearlessness 1 [2]; Fit [5]; Hard to Kill 2 [4]; Independent Income 5 [5]; Legal Enforcement Powers ("High Justice") [15]; Legal Immunity ("The King is the Law") [15]; Reputation +2 (As the honorable rightful king; Among non-rebel Caithnessers; 10 or less) [2]; Status 7* [20]; Wealth (Multimillionaire 2) [100].

Disadvantages

Code of Honor (Personal/Regal) [-5]; Enemies (Rebel faction; Hunter; 9 or less) [-30]; Reputation -3 (As a would-be tyrant; Among dedicated rebel Caithnessers; All the time) [-5]; Reputation -1 (As a rather ruthless young schemer; Among neutral or undecided Caithnessers; 10 or less) [-1]; Vow (to restore his full royal position) [-5].

Quirks: Concerns himself with every aspect of his kingdom's governance; Prefers beer to wine (sometimes accidentally offending hosts who offer the latter); Secretly deeply in love with Baroness Bronwyn; Shy around women socially; Takes insults to Caithness as insults to himself, and vice-versa. [-5]

Skills

Accounting-9 (IQ-2) [1]; Administration-12 (IQ+1) [4]; Animal Handling (Equines)-10 (IQ-1) [1]; Area Knowledge (Caithness)-13 (IQ+2) [4]; Axe/Mace-12 (DX+1) [4]; Broadsword-13 (DX+2) [8]; Cartography-10 (IQ-1) [1]; Connoisseur (Beer)-11 (IQ+0) [2]; Current Affairs/TL3 (Caithness)-12 (IQ+1) [2]; Current Affairs/TL3 (Politics) -11 (IQ+0) [1]; Dancing-10 (DX-1) [1]; Diplomacy-9 (IQ-2) [1]; Expert Skill (Natural Philosophy)-9 (IQ-2) [1]; Falconry-10 (IQ-1) [1]; Fast-Draw (Sword)-11 (DX+0) [1]; Games (Caithnesser Tournaments)-11 (IQ+0) [1]; Games (Chess)-12 (IQ+1) [2]; Heraldry-11 (IQ+0) [1]; Lance-11 (DX+0) [1]; Lance Sport-13 (DX+2) [8]; Law (Caithnesser Contract)-11 (IQ+0) [4]; Law (Caithnesser Criminal)-10 (IQ-1) [2]; Leadership-12 (IQ+1) [2]†; Philosophy (Aristotelian)-9 (IQ-2) [1]; Politics-10 (IQ-1) [1]; Public Speaking-12 (IQ+1) [2]†; Riding (Horse)-13 (DX+2) [8]; Savoir-Faire (High Society)-13 (IQ+2) [4]; Shield-12 (DX+1) [2]; Soldier/TL3-10 (IQ-1) [1]; Strategy (Land)-11 [4]; Tactics-9 (IQ-2) [1]; Wrestling-10 (DX-1) [1].

Techniques: Feint (Broadsword)-14 [2]; Ground Fighting (Broadsword)-11 [3]; Ground Fighting (Wrestling)-7 [2]; Retain Weapon (Broadsword)-14 [2].

* Three levels free from Wealth.

† +1 from Charisma.

Redhall, some between Wallace and Carrick. However, neither side has a decisive advantage, and both sides have enemies to east and west. Full-scale troop movements leave lordings unprotected, so the war is characterized by spying, occasional sabotage, and relatively small raids. In the long run, the king will probably be the victor, but this may not happen before the kingdom is consumed by its enemies – and it is by no means certain that the kingdom will not split into North and South Caithness, or even into independent baronies.

The Royalists

These lordings are loyal to King Conall VI – though not for the same reasons, and not all for good reasons.

Carrick

Castle Carrick is the traditional seat of the Kings of Caithness, across the River Conn from Carrick Town. The lording of Carrick – technically a principality, usually ruled by the King's heir – is typical of Caithness' larger lordings, consisting of a city of 20,000 or so, supported by lands farmed by a few hundred thousand peasants. Carrick benefits from rich cropland capable of producing salable surplus, and from trade with the Zarakun. Carrick is intensely loyal to Conall, both because of his martial skill and because Carrick is also one of the richest lordings in the kingdom.

Within Carrick Town are the headquarters of the King's two most formidable assets – the Order of the Stone and the Silver Hand. Stonehall is located on the river directly across from the castle. The headquarters of the Silver Hand, the King's network of spies, is called the House of Oak. Its location is a secret.

The Former Barony of Mershall

Mershall was the most northern lording in Caithness, a cool, hilly region, well-populated and heavily cultivated. Its fields produce a surplus of grain, its forests possess plenty of timber and game, and iron and silver are found in the foothills. Since it was assimilated into Carrick, the Zarakun have resumed trading into the region, and it is once again mildly prosperous. Despite this, many of the locals resent King Conall as a conqueror who used deceit to defeat their lord.

Deerwood

Deerwood is a small lording, with rolling hills, rich upland tillage, and heavy forest. It is well-known for the excellence of its game, and was the late King Morill's favorite hunting ground. Indeed, his men released young gryphons into Deerwood Forest 30 years ago, for the king to hunt when they grew up. The lands surrounding the forest have had problems with gryphon attacks ever since.

Dame Lorena of Deerwood is a Knight of the Stone, a good friend to Queen Alys, and loyal to the King. She has never married. In 2003, on her 50th birthday, she designated Sir Phillip, a fellow Knight of the Stone, as her heir. There has been a great deal of speculation, mostly untrue and unkind, about her relationship with the much-younger knight, and it is doubtful that Phillip's eventual assumption of the lording will go smoothly.

The Knights of the Stone

King Conall I established the Order of the Knights of the Stone in 1827, the year after his coronation. He worried that his knights were more concerned with land and power than with upholding knightly virtues. He created the Order to provide explicit recognition of the ideals of chivalry – and to attract knights loyal only to him. The Stone is not a religious order; all Knights of the Stone swear fealty directly to the King.

The stone from which the order takes its name was originally the cornerstone of an ancient Megalan church, and became the altar-stone of the first church built in Carrick, when Caithness was still a colony. New knights of the Order take an oath to uphold justice in God's name with their hands upon the Stone.

Near this church, Conall I raised a great building, called Stonehall, to house the Order. He installed the most honorable knights in his service there to train knights-errant. He promised no land or rewards – just a knighthood and a lifetime of spreading order in a chaotic world. The Order's ranks swelled with romantic young men, especially younger sons of noble families.

Many established knights protested, unsuccessfully. Within five years, vigorous young knights were riding all over Caithness, capturing criminals and righting wrongs. Since then, the line between traditional and Order knighthood has blurred. Knights of the Stone can swear fealty to a lord and become traditional knights, and traditional knights who have broken with their lord can sometimes be accepted into the Order. While there is still a distinction, there is no longer any enmity. The Order is broad-minded; one in five Knights of the Stone are women, and one in 10 is a nonhuman – including several halflings and elves, a few dwarves, two goblins, and one irreproachably loyal and devout reptile man. There are currently just under 300 Knights of the Stone.

The Order owns enough land – mostly near Carrick – to support itself, and provide a small stipend to members. It also provides for members in need – if one loses his armor, others will offer their older gear to make up the loss. There is a second chapter house in Simonton, built to serve Order knights in the south.

Megalan knights consider the Order of the Stone to be a joke in poor taste. Even when relations between the two kingdoms are good, the Megalan chivalry ranks the Knights of the Stone below "real" knights. When nothing more pressing demands their attention, champions of the Stone delight in journeying to Megalos and shaming local knights in single combat.

Durham

The lording of Durham is Caithness' most famous. The legendary Lord Peredur Orcslayer gained his fame by driving out the last great horde of orcish raiders in 1926. For more than 50 years, Durham enjoyed a reputation that intimidated even Megalos into directing its invasions elsewhere. Its land is rich, and in times of peace Durham Town benefits greatly from trade on the River Conn.

In 1989, Lord Peredur passed away at the age of 81. His 18-year-old granddaughter, Lady Bronwyn – famous for having survived capture by an orc raiding party a few years before – took charge. Her exact position was uncertain – some argued that the lording should revert to the crown in the absence of a male heir – and Conall was reluctant to grant someone so young a formal title. He eventually did so in 1994, when it became clear that he needed more allies. While this pleased both Bronwyn and the people of Durham, many regard it as a too-calculated move.

Fordham

Fordham lies further northeast than any other lording in Caithness. It is rich farmland with some woods, and profits from east-west trade. Unfortunately, because Durham's military fame is so great, invasions from Megalos trying to reach Carrick usually press through Fordham. The lords of Fordham have had to rebuild many times in the past. The current lord, Berd, is loyal to the King, but is reluctant to turn his back on Megalos by participating significantly in the Civil War. He is instead devoting time to building up his magical defenses, with the aid of the local wizard: one Blake, who lives on a normal-mana site 10 miles outside Fordham Town. He also recruits anyone else who shows magical talent.

Redhall

Redhall was one of the earliest strongholds of Caithness. The first permanent dwelling there was a giant castle of reddish granite, still the seat of the lording. Redhall Red ale is almost as famous as Sterling Gold; it is a richer, heartier brew, though somewhat less smooth than Gold – a "man's drink," according to the locals.

Baroness Bronwyn

At the age of 34, the Baroness of Durham is becoming a power in Caithness and a major force in the Civil War. She is both respected and beloved by her people . . . a capable fighter, with enough grasp of tactics to lead in war. She is loyal to the king, and her loyalty means that Durham is firmly behind Conall.

Bronwyn's life has revolved around her lording since the death of her grandfather. At the urging of her advisors, she got married in 1993, to a Sir Wickham, a distinguished knight. Their relationship was cordial, if not loving, and she made it very clear that she still ruled the lording. He stood proudly and quietly by her side when she became a baroness in 1994. At the time, no one knew she was a month pregnant with his child, or that Wickham would be dead within two years, of cancer.

Her son and heir, Wardell, is now 10, and shows great promise. She finished grieving a long time ago, but, because of the Civil War, has postponed any discussion of remarriage. Bronwyn has no idea that Conall is in love with her. She thinks he is a good man doing a hard job to the best of his ability, but she has never really taken to him as a person. His polite but too-indirect attempts to attract her attention do little to change this.

Bronwyn also has a secret that may shape the future of the war, and possibly all of Ytarria. In a fortified workshop in an isolated part of her barony she supports a team of underground engineers. She suspects gunpowder could solve a lot of the problems facing her and Caithness, but also knows it would attract the wrath of many currently loyal wizards, to say nothing of Megalos.

Sheltered between powerful neighbors, Redhall had rarely been invaded until the Civil War. Now it borders hostile Sterling, and is the frequent subject of rebel raids out of the forest. Lord Lathan Redbeard finds the war an incredible annoyance – he'd much rather be hunting – and while he's currently loyal, he may join the rebels if it continues to consume his time and hurt his people.

Tacitus

Tacitus lies between mountains and forest in the northwest. Thirty years ago, it was just a collection of woodland communities, respected for their huntsmen and archers. Then a young knight named Sir Elohar united the area into a military force and provided critical aid to King Morill against an orcish incursion. The King granted Tacitus lording status after the battle, and two decades later, Conall made Elohar a baron. As a result, Elohar is fiercely loyal to the King, especially since he removed the ever-present threat of Deneral of Mershall. Tacitus also has a strong ally in Fedor Ironthews, a dwarven governor of Ginnrel, in the southwestern Bronze Mountains.

Deneral

Deneral is a determined old man, slightly stooped with age but still energetic enough to be a major political force. His allies address him as "Baron," but whether he is still entitled to that rank is dubious; he effectively has Status 3 instead of his old Status 4. For decades his goal has been to control Caithness; now he'll settle for destroying Conall. In pursuit of this, he is immensely persuasive, and happy to exploit the more idealistic independent-mindedness of some of his allies.

Niall of Fordham (131 points)

"Niall of Fordham" was born Neil Shefford, in Chicago, Earth, in 1962. In 1993, while on a hiking vacation from his job as an accountant, he was caught by a minor Banestorm and deposited in Caithness.

Fortunately, he arrived close to the tower of the wizard Blake, who heard about signs of a Banestorm incident and a "gibbering madman." He located Neil, and used magic to communicate with him. Told what was likely to happen to a Banestorm victim, Neil accepted Blake's invitation to remain in the tower for a while, telling tales of Earth.

He soon not only learned Anglish, but realized that his host, who covered his mundane expenses by performing magical services, didn't have a clue about business. Offering his expertise as a treasurer and broker in exchange for continued hospitality and protection, Neil quickly made himself invaluable. He has also adapted his old first-aid training to the best medical equipment he can acquire locally.

He has thus found a niche for himself, though he continues to regard this as making the best of a catastrophe; he would certainly be interested in any prospect of a return to Earth, though he knows this is unlikely. (He has also proved to have no magical talent whatsoever.) He sympathizes with the underground engineers, and might be persuaded to help them, or any new Banestorm victims – but what he has learned about his prospects if his secret was ever revealed makes him *extremely* cautious. He doesn't want his memories wiped, and Blake's kindly behavior (which was originally inspired by simple academic curiosity) makes Niall very grateful.

He is also nervous about the possibility of an invasion from Megalos, which could all too easily involve Blake and hence himself. He has studied the civil war in Caithness, and concluded that both sides should grow up and deal with more important problems.

Niall is slightly plump, clean-shaven, and usually dressed in plain but good-quality tunic and pants.

ST 10 [0]; **DX** 10 [0]; **IQ** 13 [60]; **HT** 11 [10].
Damage 1d-2/1d; BL 20 lbs.; HP 10 [0]; Will 11 [-10]; Per 12 [-5]; FP 11 [0].
Basic Speed 5.25 [0]; Basic Move 5 [0]; Dodge 8.

Social Background

TL: 8 [25]
CF: Earth (Western) [0]; Christian region [1].
Languages: English (Native/Native) [0]; Anglish (Native/Native) [6]; Elvish (Broken/None) [1].

Advantages

Patron (Blake; 15 or less; Minimal intervention, -50%) [23]; Status 1 [5]; Unusual Background (Earth immigrant) [10]; Wealth (Comfortable) [10].

Disadvantages

Fearfulness 2 [-4]; Pacifism (Reluctant killer) [-5]; Secret (Earth immigrant) [-20]; Sense of Duty (Blake) [-2].

Quirks: Addicted to Wazifi coffee; Distrusts strange wizards; Keeps a well-hidden diary in English, and periodically checks it against his memory; Mildly squeamish; Interested in anything related to Earth. [-5]

Skills

Accounting-14 (IQ+1) [8]; Acting-12 (IQ-1) [1]; Administration-13 (IQ+0) [2]; Climbing-9 (DX-1) [1]; Computer Operation/TL8-13 (IQ+0) [1]; Current Affairs/TL3 (Headline News)-14 (IQ+1) [2]; Diplomacy -11 (IQ-2) [1]; Driving/TL8 (Automobile)-9 (DX-1) [1]; Economics-11 (IQ-2) [1]; First Aid/TL5-13 (IQ+0) [1]; Hidden Lore (Earth)-14 (IQ+1) [4]; Hiking-12 (HT+1) [4]; Housekeeping-13 (IQ+0) [1]; Merchant-13 (IQ+0) [2]; Riding-9 (DX-1) [1].

The Sterling Rebels

These lordings are loosely allied against the king. They rally behind Sterling, as their strongest lording, but they might more accurately be called the Deneral Rebels, as he provides most of their motivation.

Denton

This barony controls fertile lands and pastures and access to a large tract of forest, all of which are well-used and managed. It's surprising, therefore, how poor and cheerless the people are. The reason is Baron Cabble of Denton, a scheming man interested primarily in increasing his wealth at the expense of others. He is a prime mover in the Civil War, seeing it as an opportunity to take over one of his neighbors, even if he happens to be an ally. He will plot, intrigue, and even murder to improve his position. He is a loving father, though, and can argue a plausible case for baronial liberty.

Donlis

This lording is on a tributary of the River Smoke. Its lands are marshy and not as rich as its neighbors, but its residents are fine boatmen and make a good profit transporting goods. The river passes through a vast, trackless swamp south of Donlistown, and the locals hire themselves out – at premium rates, with a percentage going to the lording – as guides. They are the only reliable means of passing the obstacle.

Many boats are lost in the swamp each year; most of them had refused to hire a guide. The locals claim that evil swamp demons prey upon unwary boats; many merchants retort that the only predators in the swamp are river pirates, who seldom attack boats with local guides. It is now public knowledge that Lord Marsden condoned attacks on Megalan traders, and received a percentage of their haul.

When agents of the Silver Hand proved this in 1999, it provoked both the Civil War and a steep drop in Megalan trade. Marsden has rather reluctantly changed from a scoundrel and tax-cheat into a rebel against his king. Ironically, he has also had to crack down on the pirates; in the absence of Megalans, they were beginning to prey on *local* shipping.

Ferrier

This rather arid barony lies on the border between Caithness and the Great Desert. Considering its limited resources, Ferrier is a successful lording. Decades ago, the lord brought in mages to locate underground water sources. They identified several, and the result was a number of productive wells. Today, Ferrier needs to import very little food. Cattle and horses are scarce, but sheep are plentiful.

Ferrier is subject to occasional reptile man raids, though the saurians usually only steal a few sheep. Herdsmen refer to this as the "Lizard Tax," and let it pass. However, if the reptile men harm a human, the peaceful shepherds become a determined mob, willing to travel for days into the desert for vengeance. They have convinced most of the nearby reptile chieftains that human meat isn't worth the trouble.

Baron Nabbick of Ferrier is a gaunt old man, though he's been much like that for nearly two decades now. Currently 64 years old, he is greatly concerned with efficiency. He joined the rebels largely so he could govern as he sees best, and stop sending taxes to Carrick. Comfortably protected by Sterling, he provides limited support to the rebellion.

Oakwood

This lording controls fertile lands in the central region of the country. In peacetime, it benefits from trade with Megalos but, lacking a major waterway, Oakwood cannot compete with Durham or Simonton. Fortunately, it doesn't stand between Megalos and any military targets within Caithness.

The old lord died in 1996 after several years of illness. His nephew and only heir, Brance, had been hovering by his bedside, and assumed the lordship with unseemly good cheer. Lord Brance had previously served as lieutenant to Deneral of Mershall, and promptly joined the rebellion when it began. He is arrogant and abusive, and unaware how close he is to being replaced in a coup by his angry subjects. He is also a racist, and the beleaguered local halflings are now Royalist sympathizers, serving as a fifth column in the lording.

Sterling

Sterling is located west of a large, untamed forest in central Caithness. Far from the Great Desert, and protected from Megalan invasions by the forest, it was peaceful and prosperous for decades before the Civil War. Unfortunately, the old lord, a canny and respected supporter of Conall, died heroically fighting off a great orc raid in 1997. His heir, Lord Towne, counted Deneral – the former lord of Mershall – as a friend, and had spent too much time listening to his advice. Deneral convinced him that his father should have taken the throne from Conall and, as a loyal son, it was his duty to do so in his place. When Deneral called for rebellion in 1999, Towne was his first supporter. He is a genuine idealist in his way, though, and deeply suspicious of Conall's desire for personal authority.

Sterling is known for its fine beers and whiskeys. Sterling Gold, brewed from the barley crop, is widely acknowledged as the best in Caithness and western Megalos. Only slightly less famous is Sterling Silver, a clear white whiskey. Both fetch premium prices as far away as Cardiel, and are known even in Islamic lands where the consumption of alcohol is a crime.

Wallace

Wallace has more water than the other lordings that border the Great Desert, thanks to runoff from the mountains. As in Ferrier, much of the arable land is devoted to shepherding, but Wallace is agriculturally self-sufficient. Its economy has also seen several boosts in the form of gold from a mine located a few day's march through the desert. Every few years a new group of entrepreneurs opens the mine, and often becomes quite rich, until the workers mysteriously disappear. A few people blame dwarves, but Wallace's relations with Zarak have always been good. Darker possibilities include a dragon, reptile men, orcs, and *undead* dwarves . . .

Lord William of Wallace had a great deal of regard for King Conall until 1994. However, his opinion changed when Castle Defiant fell. He believes Conall did too little, too late, and deliberately used the situation to set a trap for Deneral. The Defiant refugees who live in Wallace, some of whom serve as William's advisors, naturally agree and have convinced others. Lord William joined the rebellion in early 2000, with the full support of his vassals.

Photius and the Church of Caithness

The Archdiocese of Photius is like a small kingdom itself. Its lands are subject primarily to Church Law; the King's law means little. It is a wealthy, wooded region ruled directly by Archbishop Siccius, a distinguished and strong-willed man. The inhabitants are prosperous and content. Unlike their counterparts in neighboring lordings, serfs here pay only one tithe, since the Church and their feudal lord are the same.

The city of Photius is the most impressive in Caithness. It features the magnificent Adseveration Cathedral, built during the years of the Caithness Church's independence, which has served as a rallying point in turning back several Megalan invasions. Next to it is one of the Hospitals of the Order of St. Alyce (the only other is in Calder, p. 141). The Alycite Sisters are known for their healing arts; in addition to their mundane and magical skills, many apparent miracles have occurred within their walls. Just north of the city is St. George's Keep, the chapter house for the Order of St. George of the Dragon.

The Order of St. George of the Dragon

The "Dragons" are a small militant religious order centered in Photius, unofficially devoted to the Archbishop of Caithness. Its members are monks as well as knights, and follow the Benedictine Rule. They are organized much like the Hospitallers, and swear a similar oath, though they accept the use of magic. Women are excluded; as yet, no nonhuman has asked for admittance.

The Order was founded in 1829 by Sir Galen Dragonsbane. A friend of Conall I and Archbishop Constantine, he became a knight in 1820, took vows in 1829, and promptly founded the Order. Sir Galen slew two dragons during Caithness' pioneering days, but was killed by a third in 1853.

The Dragons primarily deal with Caithnesser concerns; they are not a crusading order like the Templars or Hospitallers. They remain officially neutral in the Civil War; members of the Order have friends on both sides, and are sworn to protect all Christians. They have a long-standing friendly rivalry with the Order of the Stone, and are brusquely polite at best to Hospitallers, who are even less warm in response.

The South

The southern lordings have, one way or another, stayed out of the Civil War.

Blythe

This lording is a narrow strip of arable land between the forest and the desert, prone to droughts. It is also the biggest casualty of the Civil War. With the attention of the rest of Caithness turned inward, Blythe received no aid when it fell to the reptile men in 2001. The relationship between its citizens and the reptile men of the Great Desert had been implacably hostile for decades, and when the saurians learned of internal conflict in Caithness, they seized the opportunity.

Human scouting expeditions since have found mostly burned towns and empty homes. Some have run into reptile men looters, and others have found a few human families hiding in the fringes of the Great Forest. A concentrated military effort could drive out the reptile men and prepare Blythe for re-colonization, but at this point no one can spare the men.

Harkwood

Harkwood sits on the edge of the Great Forest, neither too close to nor far enough from the desert. It is known for woodwork and furs, and its fields are rich. It is ruled, on paper, by Baron Fenmarc, who is now 59. However, like Blythe, Harkwood is now partly occupied by nonhumans – in this case, elves.

When the rebellion began, Fenmarc sent many of his troops north to aid the king. They passed through Simonton without encountering anything more hostile than pointed requests to move on, but in Denton they were ambushed and massacred by Baron Cabble's men. This left Fenmarc in a weakened position, and after the fall of Blythe, Harkwood's citizens began abandoning the lording for safety to the northeast.

In early 2002, a group of 50 elven archers and swordsmen marched out of the Great Forest into Harkwood Town, and stated they were there "to help defend Harkwood and the human lands from reptile men and orcs." They claimed to be from Sylvilara, an elf settlement in the Forest, and were led by an elf woman called Lleroflyn. They have since helped against several raids, but over the past few years more and more elves have come, and they are now part of the power structure of the lording. Lleroflyn is Fenmarc's chief advisor, and she may soon become his *wife*.

If this marriage happens and produces a male heir, it will be a major political disruption. Currently, the heirs are Fenmarc's daughter Lady Aylara and her husband Sir Darrek. The elves refuse to get involved in the Civil War, but their presence in Harkwood is nevertheless an amazing elven involvement in human affairs. Their motives are unclear.

Simonton

Simonton is the last stop for westbound trade on the Smoke, and has fair soil for agriculture. It is southern Caithness' major trade center; in addition to agricultural products, one can find dwarven weapons and tools, elven silks and crafts, and Megalan gems and spices. This market-town is one of the few places in the Southlands where goblins are common; many of them trade on the river.

Lord Walton of Simonton is keen-witted and impatient. He will never join the rebellion so long as Cabble (whom he despises) is part of it, but he is also dubious about Conall's motives and methods. He is currently neutral in the war, and courted by both sides.

The Great Forest

This wood is the largest in Ytarria, larger than even the Blackwoods. Among Ytarrians it is said that, before the Banestorm, it and the Blackwoods were part of a single forest that covered central Ytarria. (This is true, but only the oldest beings know it for sure.) Some say that the Blackwoods' alarming growth is an attempt to reunite with the Great Forest and once more dominate the continent. The forest contains many kinds of life, both natural and fantastic. It consists primarily of pine, dark fir, and spruce trees, but there are stands of oak and elm as well. Bears, deer, elk, and boars are common, and gryphons (p. 221), wolves, and even unicorns (p. 225) dwell in its depths.

Many elves live in the Great Forest, and at least one community of dwarves is located in the mountains that bisect it. A society of gnomes lives in the southern foothills, west of God's Fence, far from the nearest humans. Bands of hobgoblins prowl its edges, preying on hunters and human villages.

To most humans, the Great Forest is a place of mystery. The boldest hunters rarely venture more than 10 miles under its eaves, and it is over 200 miles wide by 600 miles long. Adventurers may seek gold in the mountains, the furs or hides of rare animals, or to establish a new trade route to al-Haz. It is also the only way to reach the Land of the Djinn without sailing through the Maelstrom, crossing the mana-dead Great Desert, or eluding Hazi guards and crossing hundreds of miles of mountains.

Al-Haz

Al-Haz is Yrth's greatest Islamic nation, and sees itself as a rival to Megalos for glory. It also views itself as the heart of Islamic orthodoxy. The mullahs of al-Haz teach that someday the faithful will conquer the world and convert it to Shi'ite Islam . . . but not yet.

Al-Haz is bordered on the north by the Great Forest and al-Wazif, on the east by Cardiel, and on the south by the ocean. Al-Haz and al-Wazif are allies, but each keeps a nervous watch upon the other. Relations between al-Haz and Cardiel are polite, due to common interests, but distant, due to religion. The exact location of the western border is vague; outsiders are simply not permitted to travel beyond the great mountain range known as the Fence of God. It is known that the holy city of Geb'al-Din nestles within the mountains, and that Hazi merchants trade with lands far to the southwest.

Geography

Al-Haz is dominated by plains, drier than those to the north and east, yet fertile enough. In the west rises the Fence of God, stretching from the Great Forest to the sea. Its upper slopes are covered with forests of pine, spruce, fir, and birch. The foothills are dotted with cedars and olive groves. The rest of the country has few true trees, but a fair growth of date palms – a basic source of food for the population.

The weather of al-Haz is hot and dry in comparison with most other lands. Even so, the Fence of God stops the sea winds and insures adequate rainfall, while the Alhallahan River with its tributaries and some irrigation canals waters the central plains. The only true wasteland lies in the northwest, where the hills are so dry and rocky that only outlaws live there. The Great Valley and the mountains see snow in winter, but even the highest peaks are bare and brown by the end of spring.

Fields of grain dominate the central plain. Many domesticated animals, especially hardings (p. 229), are raised here – but not pigs, which are against Islamic dietary la). However, vast stretches of the northern and eastern plains are as yet untilled. Here roam hardings, antelope, wild cattle, striders (p. 224), bushwolves (p. 219), lions, and jackals. There are also some paladins (p. 223) and even a few elephants. Several of the larger species are protected game, and may be killed only by the Sultan or his pashas, who also have sole hunting rights in various preserves. The animals which make the best trophies are also favored prey of dragons flying from the mountains, which much vexes the Sultan.

The wild plains are also home to nomad tribes, who live by driving their herds from one watering place to the next. The tribesmen's favorite activities are hunting and raiding, and they answer only to their own sheikhs. These sheikhs are vassals of the pashas, but are left alone as long as they confine their raiding to each other.

Most of al-Haz is a normal-mana area.

History

Al-Haz has been a center for Islam since the first years of the Banestorm, as it was the region where most of the mullahs and scholars brought to Yrth found themselves. It was here that they built two of the first great cities on Yrth, Gebel al-Hikmah and al-Ab'ra. Then, in 1160, Allah revealed the holy rock in the Great Valley deep within the mountains to His people; it was there that Geb'al-Din, the new holy city, was built.

These cities prospered, but the majority of Muslims still wandered the plains with their herds, ruled by tribal sheikhs. It was not until the

Megalan incursion in the first half of the 15th century that the tribes united to form a nation.

In 1442, the mullahs of al-Haz summoned the sheikhs to Gebel al-Hikmah. The northern tribes were already fighting for their lives against the crusaders, and needed organized support. The mullahs of the south spoke of a unified Muslim nation to lead the fight against the invading Christians.

Many of the sheikhs opposed this plan. They favored tribal independence, guerrilla raids on the infidel, and, perhaps a temporary defensive alliance. But the arguments of the mullahs and the rulers of the cities carried more weight. Eventually one devout tribal leader was named Sultan, Sword of Islam, Leader of the Faithful. The men of al-Haz went to war.

They were greatly taken aback when, two years later, the northern tribes rejected their leadership. The northerners chose a warlord of their own, a Sunni tribesman, naming him Caliph of the new nation of al-Wazif. A year after that, al-Kard was formed to the East. Splintered into three separate political units, the Muslims still fought side-by-side against the invaders, even though internal disputes were frequent and tempers often ran hot. Eventually this infighting led to the fall of al-Kard. The Hazis felt overlooked, used, and even betrayed by their Wazifi brethren.

As generations of war dragged on, this attitude hardened. The duty of a warrior of al-Haz was to protect the homeland against invasion and pollution. The old ways were best; outsiders were suspect. Al-Haz was secure, with al-Wazif and Cardiel as buffer states shielding it from the Megalan menace. Thus it is today. And yet all is not peaceful.

The current Sultan is Mamoun al-Mansur – "the Victorious." In fact, the

Hazi and Wazifi Status

Level	*Examples*
7	Sultan, Caliph
6	Immediate family of the Sultan/Caliph, Vizier of al-Haz
5	Outer family of the Sultan/Caliph, Great Judge of the Ulama
4	Hazi Cadi, Great Official
3	Middle-Ranking Official, Great Merchant, Greater Wazifi Tribal Sheikh
2	Lesser Mullah or Official, Hazi or "Landed" 'Amir, Typical Tribal Sheikh
1	Imam, Lesser Hazi Tribal Sheikh, Shopkeeper
0	Typical Peasant, Urban Craftsman
-1	Poor Peasant, Fisherman, or Porter, Urban Rabble
-2	Beggar, Lowliest Slave

Slaves Under Islam

Slaves in the Islamic nations of Ytarria are not automatically despised; after all, destiny may cast a virtuous man into misfortune. Hence, slave characters may have a wide range of Status levels, although they also have a Social Stigma (Valuable Property). As a rule of thumb, a slave character typically has Status two less than that of his immediate supervisor – his owner in most cases, a free court official if he is part of a the ruler's household. Thus, a slave acquired by a Status 0 shopkeeper (the lowest Status likely to acquire a slave in practice) is Status -2, whereas the Sultan's personal slave-bodyguard could be as high as Status 5. But while the latter can boss most free Hazis around, he *is* still a slave, which they won't ever forget – however they may bow to his face.

Victorious has never seen war, and the lords of al-Haz think him a weakling. He has produced no children, but has adopted several young nobles; one will eventually succeed him, though probably not without bloodshed. In the meantime, Mamoun sits in his famed Blue Pavilion, amusing himself with poets and concubines. The land is run by the viziers and pashas, and remains wealthy and strong in the Faith.

Society

The social structure of al-Haz is a formalized version of the Yrth-Muslim traditional pattern discussed on p. 48. Note that Status is linked to Administrative or Military Rank, with some scope for flexibility.

Social Status

Supreme authority in al-Haz, both political and religious, rests with the Sultan. However, he is always advised – some say controlled – by three or four viziers. These are powerful nobles, mullahs, or scholars who aid in making decisions and handle tasks with which the Sultan does not wish to dirty his hands. The office of vizier is Administrative Rank 6, and the holder gains Status 6.

Regional and local administration, and military logistics, are handled by *pashas* of various ranks, from Pasha of Four Horsetails (Administrative Rank 5) down to Pasha of One Horsetail (Rank 2). Technically, pashas are appointed governors, holding their positions by virtue of talent rather than birth. However, the governorships of many fiefdoms have been given to certain families in perpetuity, to be passed on from father to son; any attempt to remove the family's privileges would lead to rebellion. Even where this has not been formalized, the recognition of an heir as pasha when his father dies is often something of a formality. Lesser pashas are under the authority of greater ones.

Clerical duties, minor local affairs, and some legal matters are dealt with by *muhtasibs* (Administrative Rank 1). 'Amirs, the elite mounted warriors of

Muslim Names

Names in the Muslim nations are Arabic in form. They can grow rather long, especially among nobles.

The first part is the given name. Common given names include Abbas, Bilal, Jafar, Hakim, Hasan, Hayyan, Ismail, Muhammid, Mahmoud, Hammid, Musa, Nizam, Khalid, Said, Walid, and Yaqut. Female names include Ayesha, Fatima, Hafsa, Sagirah, Talibah, Umayman, and Zobeida. Some have Biblical equivalents: Ayyub equates to Job, Maryam to Miriam or Mary, Haroun to Aaron, Ishaq to Isaac, and so on.

Next sometimes comes a "parent" name, traditionally given to men (with the prefix "abu") and often to women (prefixed "umm") after the birth of their first son. Thus, "abu-Firas" is the father of Firas, "umm Hasan" the mother of Hasan. This convention can also be used figuratively; the captain of an elephant troop, for instance, might style himself Abu Fiil – father of the elephant.

Next comes a genealogical name, indicating the person's parentage or lineage. The prefix ibn- means "son of." Ahmed ibn-Haroun might be literally the son of Haroun, or a member of a family with a distinguished ancestor named Haroun. This can be compounded to show multiple generations, so "ibn-Muqla ibn-Omar" is the son of Muqla and grandson (or more distant descendant) of Omar. A family or clan claiming descent from someone called Omar would be the Beni Omar – the Sons of Omar. The female equivalent, "daughter of," is "bint-."

After this, there will usually be an "adjectival" name indicating the character's place or tribe of origin, or other background. For example, "Sayyid al-Firuzi" is "Sayyid from Firuz."

Finally, the character will probably acquire a "nickname" or honor, possibly even more than one. This often involves the prefix "abd-," meaning servant or slave of; "Abdallah" is simply "Servant of God." This may be placed before any of the Ninety-Nine Holy Names of God to indicate religious dedication, or before the name of a lord to whom he has sworn loyalty – for a slave, before the name of his owner. Other nicknames include the likes of al-Mansur, "the Victorious," al-Azrad, "the Destroyer," or as-Safa, "the Pure." Such an epithet may be applied by friends or a ruler, or chosen by the holder. Poets or historians may identify a man only by his epithet, if it is very honorable or unusual. Common folk will be known by their job – al-Hammad, the smith, as-Saari, the thief – or perhaps by a distinguishing feature – al-Jahiz, "goggle-eyes." A respected vizier might be known as "Rukn-ad-Dawla," "Support of the State." Also, a Muslim who has made the Hajj pilgrimage (p. 66) may adopt the honorific "Hajji."

the armies of al-Haz, are Military Rank 1-3 and usually Status 2; they rarely hold land, as the monarchy and pashas seek to discourage the formation of a self-sufficient warrior class which could threaten their authority. Both muhtasibs and 'amirs are appointed to their positions, although there are certainly families with traditions of military or bureaucratic service, who bring their sons up to follow in their footsteps. The leaders of wandering tribes are sheikhs, usually with Status 1 or 2, depending on the tribe's size and prestige.

The government and army of al-Haz is exclusively male at all levels, and it can be hard for a young man of low birth to gain entry to the hierarchy, but once in, talent is rewarded. At the lower levels at least, precise social class is less important than ability.

Elsewhere in society, wealth is respected as a sign of Allah's favor, and the wealthy can advance one or two levels in Status if they cultivate the right contacts and image. The rich lead comfortable, even sybaritic lives, in walled houses whose courtyards hold beautiful gardens.

There is prejudice at all levels against anyone not of the Islamic faith, regardless of race, color, or nationality. However, al-Haz has a number of small Christian and Jewish communities, mostly in the larger cities, who are tolerated as *ahl al-Kitab*, "People of the Book": fellow believers in God, even if misguided. In game terms, they have the Social Stigma (Minority Group). They exist at the sufferance and under the protection of the local pasha, who benefits from the additional taxes he can extract from them.

A community of infidels which loses this protection is in deep trouble. Two centuries ago there were more of these communities than there are today; the promise of religious freedom in Cardiel has lured many non-Muslims eastward.

Nonhumans

Central al-Haz has almost no nonhuman inhabitants. There are no dwarves living in the mountains of God's Fence, and no elves anywhere. However, the great coastal cities are home to some merchant halflings and

The Rulers of Al-Haz

The difference between nominal and actual power in al-Haz is common knowledge throughout Ytarria. Still, no one should disregard the Sultan; his guards and servants will usually obey his every word, and he could in theory order anyone he sees slain – or ennobled.

Sultan Mamoun al-Mansur

Mamoun is an excellent example of a spoiled rich kid who grew into a spoiled rich man. He takes only a casual interest in day-to-day affairs, allowing his viziers to run the country for him. He paid a little more attention during the Frontier Wars, but the subtle problems of peace bore him. His greatest interest is who will win the next polo match, the best verse for his newest epic poem, or what the new harem girl looks like.

He is an unremarkable-looking man in his mid-40s, 5'6" tall, overweight and well on his way to becoming fat – although participation in aristocratic sports has saved him from the worst consequences of his lifestyle so far. His hair is still thick and black, and his eyes are brown. He is a competent amateur poet, artist, and public speaker, just shrewd enough to ignore flatterers who call him a genius, and trained in the rudiments of administration and swordplay.

Unfortunately, he is also infertile, though he certainly never stops trying. He has often considered seeking magical aid, but his people's prejudices make this difficult. This fuels his hatred for the Balikites (pp. 72,128), who have in the past slain one of his favorite advisors and a couple of scholar-poets he rather liked due to rumors that they practiced magic. They also prevent a magical solution to the plague which killed one of his viziers. Mamoun *really* wants Balik dead.

The Viziers

The viziers are the Sultan's trusted advisors, and currently the true rulers of al-Haz. There are four of them; none are as young as they were, but the Sultan, combining personal loyalty with a dislike of change, is unwilling for any of them to retire.

The last new vizier was appointed 13 years ago, after plague (p. 127) killed his predecessor. *Barak ibn-as-Safa* was appointed for his reputation as a scholar. His predecessor, the plague victim, was one of the greatest historians of al-Haz, and an expert on law and theology. Barak is well-read and not stupid, but strictly an average thinker. He spends hours in the archives of Gebel al-Hikmah, desperately trying to live up to the expectations heaped on him. The other viziers find him knowledgeable enough, and think that his efforts simply show dedication.

Omar al-Acayib is another scholar, though following stranger paths. He is actually a practicing mage, though he keeps this *extremely* quiet. Omar voluntarily oversees the Balikite matter, and constantly presses for more action. His fellow advisors wonder at his zeal.

Salim ibn-Marid as-Sofian is a conservative man, ever more so as age wears him down, who believes that the best way to handle any situation is always the *old* way. Despite his lack of innovation, Salim was an excellent administrator and general in his time, and distinguished himself in the Frontier Wars. He always believed that the Balikite matter would blow over eventually; as it continually fails to do so, he simply ignores it ever more strenuously.

Sharif ibn-Ali al-Abyad is an excellent administrator and famously incorruptible. He began his career as a merchant, and oversees trade throughout al-Haz, as well as keeping the palace's books. Though he is from the port city of al-Abyad, he has never favored it above any other, a fact that annoys his relatives.

metal-working dwarf families. There is no prejudice against nonhumans who accept Islam.

Further, the eastern plains have a tribe of semi-civilized reptile men descended from escaped Megalan slaves. They are even more insular and xenophobic than the other wanderers of the area, having no use for anyone not in their tribe. They tolerate their Muslim neighbors no better than the other nomad tribes tolerate outsiders. The government considers them too much trouble to suppress; they mostly avoid contact with humanity, after all.

Magic

The magical arts are suppressed rather than encouraged in al-Haz, and magic is almost totally unknown in rural areas. Even moderate mullahs only condone its use under preferably close supervision, and then only for healing or in defense of the Faith. Use of magic in the holy city of Geb'al-Din is practically a sacrilege.

The sultans have long resisted pressure to ban magic outright, knowing full well the advantage that would give al-Haz's rivals. The Balikites (pp. 72, 128) are just the latest and worst reaction to this "laxity."

Warfare

Al-Haz is currently at peace – on the surface. In reality, there is fierce rivalry with the Sunnis to the north, mistrust of the Christians to the east, bandits and Balikites growing ever bolder in the northwestern wastes, and Hashishin (p. 72) in all the major cities. Certain offshore islands are pirate lairs, though the pirates are few and cautious, and more often base themselves in al-Haz for raids elsewhere than vice versa. For more on pirate lairs and tactics, see *Min*, and *Pirates*, p. 97.

Meanwhile, devout warriors chafe at the subsidiary role that they were obliged to play in the Frontier Wars (p. 16), and dream of fighting the infidel on their own terms. They are unlikely to be given the chance for a long time, given the nation's internal problems, but that does not make them any happier. Thus, the armies of al-Haz are not only strong, but seek opportunities to extend their battle experience.

Adventuring in Al-Haz

Al-Haz is, to a large extent, Yrth's second "bad guy" nation. Often warlike, Hazis are capable of subtle, devious, and ruthless subversion as well as ferocious military action. Game-wise, their country will most likely serve as an antagonist.

Yet al-Haz also suffers from internal unrest. The Sultan's inability to suppress the Balikites rankles him and makes them brash, while Hashishin (p. 72) and ambitious pashas seek to manipulate everything to their own advantage. This might be a comfort to its enemies if victorious rebels didn't amount to an even worse threat.

However, al-Haz and its people have their virtues. Devout and sincere about their moral code, many of them are honest and honorable. They value learning, provided that it does not undermine faith, and tolerate some other religions within strict limits. Trade with them is often profitable. They are no more monsters than Yrth's other humans.

Of course, al-Haz is not much of a place to go to have fun. Still, from an adventurer's point of view, the land's many stern laws might be seen as opportunities. Rescuing Christian believers fanatical enough to proselytize in al-Haz would certainly be an *interesting* mission. Smuggling alcohol might almost be profitable enough to justify the risk.

There is also the matter of Geb'al-Din. Why an infidel should seek to visit is hard to say, especially since boasting of the achievement would get one targeted by angry Muslims. Islamic PCs – or characters who can pass as such – might go on pilgrimage, perhaps guarding a famous Wazifi wizard or a major political figure. They might also investigate the persistent plague in the city and maybe find a solution. If magic is involved, this may prove even more dangerous than being caught near the sacred Koranic rock.

True to their nomad roots, the fighting men of al-Haz are virtually all mounted. Each pasha maintains a troop of men – mostly light horse, with a contingent of heavy cavalry – to keep the peace. Any or all of these troops are available to the Sultan on command. Men of the wandering tribes are practically born in the saddle, and are trained in warrior skills from childhood. Still, this fighting force is nowhere near the size or strength of those of the crusading era, and the Sultan does not entirely trust any of them. In a full-scale war, al-Haz would certainly require mercenaries to fill out its ranks.

The Law

In al-Haz, the Shari'a code (p. 67) is observed meticulously. All cases are dealt with by religious courts, presided over by a cadi or mullah. The Court of the Sultan is the highest authority, with jurisdiction over any case that catches the Sultan's eye. Cadis are highly respected in al-Haz (most are Status 4), and virtually incorruptible. So, though the laws may be harsh, they are interpreted fairly.

Punishments often consist of maiming or flogging, with death in extreme cases and for repeat offenders. Pain is considered a means by which the offender expiates his sins, as well as a deterrent to others. Therefore, punishments are conducted in public, in a very businesslike fashion, usually on Fridays.

Noteworthy Hazi laws include a total ban on alcohol. Possession or consumption earns a flogging; sale is a maiming offense. Public drunkenness is thus unknown. Doctors may keep a small supply for medicinal purposes, although this is considered distasteful. The same laws apply to Ytarrian hashish (p. 125). Other intoxicants are also heavily controlled, although most are seen as medicines with unfortunate side-effects.

Public non-Islamic worship is also banned. Christians and Jews are permitted their beliefs, but may not preach publicly, display religious symbols, or gather for worship in public

places or groups of over 10. Some pashas quietly relax this restriction for law-abiding communities. Punishment is usually by confiscation of property; repeat offenses bring enslavement or death.

Any behavior, especially by a female, that offends a staid mullah can be classed as "lewd display." Failure to wear a veil in public; displaying bare arms or legs; public displays of affection; criticism of an official – all are very risky. Foreign or non-Islamic women are not exempt. The usual punishment is flogging – behind curtains, so as not to offend modesty.

The Coast

The southern shores of al-Haz have sandy beaches, fishing villages, and tall cities overlooking bustling harbors. The weather is at least warm year round, and hot in summer. In the shallows, young children dive for pearls. Fishing boats follow the dolphins to schools of tuna and shrimp. Merchant ships from northern lands sail close to shore, keeping a sharp lookout for pirates, who also raid the numerous, valuable salt pans along the coast.

Al-Ab'ra

Al-Ab'ra is the second largest city in al-Haz, and the busiest seaport. It is located at the mouth of the Alhallahan River, on which countless barges carry the goods of the rich central plain to the sea. Merchants from many lands come here to trade for ceramics, glassware, salt, and textiles.

The most expensive trade item, however, is one not bartered in public – *hashish*. While not the same as Earth's hemp, this plant is very similar in its effects. The drug is strictly illegal in al-Haz; the punishments for cultivating, selling, or using it are as severe as those for alcohol. But, since the plant does not grow well in northern climes, there is a lucrative black market. The trade is run by gangs who sell it abroad after smuggling it out of the country on foreign merchant ships, which are less likely to be searched by the authorities.

While the trade is usually quiet, vicious turf wars periodically erupt, leading to mutilated corpses in the Alhallahan, and occasionally the murder of public officials who try to suppress the gangs. Years ago, after one such murder, Pasha of Four Horsetails Abdul-Aziz ibn-Ahmad vowed to put a stop to the violence; after two attempts on *his* life, he apparently became less interested. He may be genuinely fearful, or he may be preparing a more subtle campaign or a devastating strike. Those citizens who indulge in the vice of gambling are laying bets on the matter.

Al-Abyad

The small city of al-Abyad lies on a bay near the foothills of the Fence of God. Its people and the nearby peasants survive by growing wheat and raising hardings and cattle for trade to the southwest. Just west of the city is the Gate of Allah, the pass through God's Fence to the borders of the Lands of the Djinn (p. 174). The great castle of Pasha of Three Horsetails Ayyub ibn-Madawi stands at the entrance, and his guards allow only a few favored merchants to pass.

Shipbuilding and repair are another important industry in al-Abyad. Timber can be cut in the nearby hills, and ships damaged by the Maelstrom often limp in for repairs. The shipwrights charge appropriately outrageous rates. Many ships are also wrecked on the rocky promontory southwest of the city; scavenging along the shore provides an income for many poor families.

Visitors to al-Abyad may hear the legend of Crazy Ghalib. 50 or 60 years ago, a man was found half-dead on the shore. Delirious and gibbering, "Ghalib" told his rescuers that he had been aboard a ship that had been wrecked in the Maelstrom; the villagers who found him would have guessed as much. Ghalib went on, however, to say that his ship had been *returning* from the Lands of the Djinn, where its crew had been living for the last 20 years. Ghalib was assumed to have been maddened by terror and

The Maelstrom

The Maelstrom is a huge, permanent storm and whirlpool off the coast of al-Haz. Its location is not fixed; it grows and shrinks, and sometimes actually buffets the coast of al-Haz to the northwest or the Ring Islands to the east.

The Maelstrom makes sea travel around God's Fence practically impossible. It typically takes four days to get through; one Shiphandling roll, at -6, is required from the master *each day*. Successful prediction of the Maelstrom's precise location and behavior, through Weather Sense skill (again at -6), or possibly magic (at similar penalties thanks to the magically chaotic nature of the subject), will let a ship make it through in three days. Attempts to calm the sea magically will simply be overwhelmed by the Maelstrom's power.

A failed roll means a ship takes significant damage; two failed rolls, or a critical failure, sinks it. A ship which takes damage on the second or third day must decide whether to turn back, or to go on and hope repairs can be made at its destination. Of course, a ship that turns back must still make one or more rolls on the way home. And the pirates of both al-Haz and the Ring Islands are always on the lookout for storm-damaged ships.

A ship braving the Maelstrom will also need sufficient crew to watch the sails and rudder day and night – not the standard for Ytarrian coast-huggers. In fact, few NPC crews will undertake such a voyage without some exceptional reaction and Leadership rolls, and no sailor given such a command would consider a refusal to be mutiny.

Going *around* would mean venturing far out into the deep ocean – a virtually impossible prospect given current standards of navigation on Yrth, carrying its own vast risks if the vessel should go too far, encounter ship-devouring monsters, or simply blunder back into the Maelstrom by mistake.

thirst, and his ravings were treated as entertainment. Unfortunately, he never recovered his wits, but spent many years sitting in the marketplace, begging for alms, mumbling, and telling wild tales about the djinn – and about the treasure that had been aboard his ship.

Then, a few years ago, there was a strange storm during night, and in the morning Ghalib was gone. Two people who been kind to him over the years awoke to find fat pouches containing gold nuggets beside their pillows, while fishermen who had risen early that morning still swear that they saw a wrecked ship rising from the waves a little way out to sea and being carried off westwards by a magical wind. Patching together secondhand versions of Ghalib's tales might still be a worthwhile project.

The Mountains

The mountain range called the Fence of God stretches the length of al-Haz, from the Great Forest and the badlands in the north to the ocean and the Maelstrom in the south. Nestled among its slopes and valleys are the great cities of Gebel al-Hikmah and Geb'al-Din, as well as the "Eagle's Nest" of the Assassin cult and the heartland of the Balikite movement. Local peasants survive by herding sheep and goats, hunting, and planting crops in the rocky soil of the foothills, and by keeping their heads down.

Gebel al-Hikmah

Gebel al-Hikmah is the capital of al-Haz. Here, Sultan Mamoun al-Mansur resides in the Blue Pavilion, attended by viziers and concubines. The city is also a way-station for pilgrims bound for Geb'al-Din. Guards question anyone wishing to enter the city, and non-believers are turned back. The Sultan's officials, and the Ghazis of the Crescent Moon, watch visitors very carefully.

As the Sultan's permanent residence, Gebel al-Hikmah is frequently the site of lavish entertainments and spectacles. Among them are great polo matches. A large field is specially maintained for this purpose, complete with raised seating, where spectators can relax on silken cushions in the shade of brightly-colored awnings. The teams are made up of professionals, hired by various pashas, merchants, mullahs and viziers in attendance upon the Sultan. Mamoun is so infatuated with the game that sponsoring a team is a reliable method of gaining his favor.

Because of the political advantage to be realized, behind-the-scenes competition at these polo tournaments is fierce. Bribes are common, as is the practice of hiring away the star player of an opposing team. If a player can't be bought, he can always be incapacitated, or even killed. Horses may be stolen, drugged, or crippled prior to an important match. Games may be thrown in exchange for favors. Threats, diplomacy, and treachery are the order of the day; a large tournament is a place where treaties, trade, and marriages are arranged, and old scores settled.

Geb'al-Din

Hidden in the Great Valley deep within the Fence of God, the Holy City of Geb'al-Din is the beating heart of Islam on Yrth. It is the destination of every Muslim's mandatory once-in-a-lifetime pilgrimage (p. 66), and the *qibla* to which the daily prayers are directed. It has been called the "City of a Hundred Mosques," and indeed it

Arabic Prefixes

In Arabic, "al-" is a definite article; it means "the." Many Arabic words have it as a prefix, including the names of Ytarrian countries such as al-Wazif, cities such as al-Abyad, and people such as Mamoun al-Mansur.

Normally, it's written as "al-" in English texts. However, when it comes before certain letters at the start of the noun (d, dh, n, r, s, sh, t, th, or z), the "l" becomes silent and is effectively replaced by the other letter in question. To represent this and help readers pronounce such names correctly, we follow the convention of replacing the "l" with the other letter, as in "ash-Sharif" or "at-Talib." Which is why, for example, the city which was referred to as "al-Siyassi" in older ***GURPS*** books is now called "as-Siyassi."

has more, but the most important is the Shrine of the Rock, which houses the great black boulder on which are carved thousands of passages from the Koran. Only Muslims are allowed even to see the city. Any non-believer caught anywhere near its walls is very likely to be summarily executed.

Because of its role as the goal of the Hajj, Geb'al-Din has a large transient population. Only the mullahs, a few cadis, guards, inn staff, and the peasants and servants who support them, live here year-round. Even the merchants who sell to pilgrims come and go as their stocks run out. The nature of Geb'al-Din's population is a large part of the city's current problem.

Because, tragically, Geb'al-Din is persistently afflicted with a plague. The first outbreak was 15 years ago. Every month that year, dozens of people died within the walls. Guards and mullahs tried to warn away anyone approaching the city, but few would heed the warnings, especially when the month of pilgrimage arrived. Worse, the city lacked the food supplies to support a large population for long, so those who could travel had to depart for their homes as soon as their devotions were complete, even if they were becoming sick. Soon, lesser outbreaks were reported all across al-Haz, and even in cities in Cardiel and al-Wazif.

Hazi doctors struggled with the outbreak, which nonetheless claimed numerous victims. A delegation arrived from al-Wazif to offer aid, but as they included wizards, they were not completely welcome. Eventually, the various healers brought the problem under control, and the Wazifis returned home – but not before two of their number were murdered by Balikites, and two more died of the plague.

The mullahs were especially obstructive about permitting the use of magic within the walls of Geb'al-Din, and the plague was never entirely eradicated there. Despite precautions, isolated cases and small outbreaks have recurred every year since. Fortunately, none have ever coincided with the time of pilgrimage – but this is sure to happen one day, and then the nightmare will return.

Firuz

"Firuz" is the local name for the badlands region located in the northwestern corner of al-Haz, running up to the foothills in the west and the Great Forest to the north. It is a treacherous land of broken hills, dead-end canyons, and sudden cliffs. Very little vegetation grows, due to the almost constant drought. Native hardings and woolens (p. 229) are the only domesticated animals capable of surviving unaided, and they provide much of the livelihood of the hardy folk of Firuz.

Those who settled here were almost all originally outlaws from one place or another, driven to these broken lands to eke out what living they could. The region has never had much organized government. The inhabitants survive as best they can, often by stealing from their neighbors.

A few years ago, however, this changed. Balik Abdallah al-Firuz sparked a fire among the tired, poor inhabitants, preaching that magic is an abomination, its use the root of evil and the source of their problems. He built a loyal following, organizing the scattered people into warriors – and assassins, sent out to slaughter magicians. With a growing price on his head, Balik may be hidden deep in the

The Pilgrims' Plague

The disease endemic to Geb'al-Din is a form of bubonic plague – a bacillus spread by fleas, which transfer it from the infected rats which act as the disease's "reservoir." Under the system given on p. B442-4, this is a blood agent, although the subtle, unpredictable mechanisms which transmit the disease and trigger epidemics make this less than obvious. It has a delay of 1d days and a HT-3 roll to resist, and does 1d-2 points of toxic damage (minimum 1), with a 12-hour interval and 20 cycles.

The first symptom is usually shivering. At 1/3 HP lost, the victim is Nauseated; at 1/2 HP, he also suffers Moderate Pain in the presence of strong light. At 2/3 HP lost, add permanent Moderate Pain (Severe in strong light), and the victim is either Dazed, Hallucinating, or subject to temporary Insomnia (select randomly). Body temperature rises drastically. The most characteristic sign is the appearance of *buboes*, large purple welts on the arms and back. A Diagnosis roll at +2 will identify the disease on sight of these.

Occasionally, plague cases take more virulent "pneumonic" or "septicemic" forms, in which case the disease may be transmitted as a respiratory infection. Fortunately, there have been few or no such cases in Geb'al-Din. Pneumonic plague has a HT-5 roll to resist, does 1d-1 damage, and has a 3-hour interval and 35 cycles; for septicemic, this becomes HT-6, 1d damage, a one-hour interval and 50 cycles.

Bubonic plague is fairly rare on Yrth, but doctors learn about it, and it is nowhere as devastating as it was on medieval Earth; a combination of healing magic and basic information from Earth means that, while it is still a killer, it can usually be controlled. Only trained doctors know the details of how it spreads, but many people have at least some vague idea that the problem involves rats and fleas, and know about quarantine procedures. Unfortunately, however, the Hazi prejudice against magic, and the transient population of the Holy City, make this one of the worst possible places for an outbreak. To add to the problem, the city is full of quacks with false cures and preventatives. A successful Physician roll will reveal such nostrums to be false, though visitors must be careful whom they denounce.

Magical cures work as well against the plague as against other diseases. A few old grimoires even hold a specialized "Plaguebane" spell, which can cure many victims at once, and there exists at least one alchemical formula for a specific against plague. Unfortunately, neither of these is more than a vague rumor in al-Haz.

badlands, unseen by any but his personal followers (if at all) for years, but his cult still grows.

Most of Firuz is a low-mana area.

The Plains

Rich, fertile plains set in soft, rolling hills make up most of the land area of al-Haz. The central areas are dotted with small farming communities. To the north and east are vast prairies, dominated by wild herds of antelope, zebra, bison, and cattle, as well as flocks of striders (p. 224) and a few paladins (p. 223).

Nomad Tribes

These fierce, proud people follow the herds from area to area; each tribe has its own territory, though more-or-less friendly raids are common. The most prized possessions of any tribe are its horses. Bred for stamina as well as speed and beauty, the steeds of al-Haz are rivaled only by those of the Nomad Lands (p. 167) in value, and are far swifter, if less agile. Yearly contests are held between tribes, racing prized mounts over long, treacherous courses, with the winner taking his pick of the competition's bloodlines to strengthen his own.

The tribesmen also serve as al-Haz's first line of defense against invasion. They are extremely suspicious of anything out of the ordinary, and will often attack first and ask questions later. Strangers, especially non-Muslims, are always suspect, and usually at least detained for questioning. Also, border incursions against the Sunni tribesman of al-Wazif are not unheard of; although this is officially frowned upon, it is how the Sultan gets much of his intelligence on Wazifi activity.

Alhallabad

Alhallabad is situated on the main fork of the river Alhallahan. The surrounding farmlands are prosperous enough to support its population, but the bulk of its wealth is derived from trade with the nomads. The only real city in central al-Haz, Alhallabad is a yearly stop for the bands who wander the plains, and is famed for its fabulous horse markets. It is also a magnet for scholars, doctors, artists, poets and mullahs, and houses the largest college and library in al-Haz. Governed by a hereditary Pasha of Three Horsetails, Alhallabad should be a very wealthy place.

However, it has troubles. The last Pasha, Alihaba al-Khalil, had three sons, each of whom coveted the power and riches of the city. Old and sick, the Pasha decided to split his holdings equally between them, hoping to force them to work together for the good of the whole. Constant rivals throughout their lives, the sons simply did not accept this. Meanwhile, after Balikite-inspired murders and riots, Alihaba attempted to repress the sect. His efforts were clumsy and ineffectual, angering the nomad tribes, to the point of open fighting in the streets.

The Pilgrim's Plague carried Alihaba off 13 years ago, though age and infirmity would doubtless have ended his life soon enough. The three sons promptly faced off, waiting just a short time out of respect for their father and, more practically, to seek allies. After months of increasing violence, moderated only by shrewd political moves from some of the parties involved, the Sultan grew angry at the petitions he was receiving from the battered townsfolk, and enforced a peace. See *The Three of Alhallabad* for the current situation.

West Tredroy

See p. 142 for details of all three parts of this city. West Tredroy is the largest city in al-Haz, though it is the smallest section of the divided metropolis. It is also the center for goods from the north coming into al-Haz, where they are picked up by merchants to be traded across the plains.

The Balikites in Firuz

The Balikites do not have the history of the Hashishin on Yrth (p. 72), and their strongholds are armed camps and fortified villages, not castles – but their territory is well-defended nonetheless. The loyalty of their scattered followers provides them with effective defense in depth. Anyone hoping to collect the Sultan's bounty will find them infernally hard to dig out. The low local mana may not help.

Balik Abdallah al-Firuz

The founder of the Balikites has survived for many years, despite the price on his head, the hatred of countless wizards, and the harshness of the country in which he hides.

Or so it is generally thought. The fact is, Balik has not been provably seen, by any but a few of his most loyal followers, for most of those years. This is probably only wise of him, but it fuels rumors of his death or indisposition. The movement can continue well enough without him, though, and the idea that he is still free and defying the hunters gives Balikites even more confidence.

Assuming that he is alive, he will be in his 60s by now, and his hair was already silver when he was last seen in public. He has, or had, piercing black eyes and a long thin beard; he appeared unremarkable, but his charisma and oratory were legendary. His belief in his own ideas was absolute, and his command of Islamic theology was sufficient to let him defend them against critics.

Rhajid al-Garyhan

Rhajid Al-Garyhan is the combat leader of the Balikites, a capable fighter in his 50s responsible for their evasive strategy and terror tactics – mostly copied from bandits and Hashishin, but no less effective for that. He also trains their most capable warriors. He *has* been seen by outsiders in recent years, although he mostly spends his time managing the defenses in Firuz. A shrewd foe who wanted to cripple the movement might well target Rhajid.

The Three of Alhallabad

The three sons of Pasha Alihaba al-Khalil are very different characters. All three are maneuvering for importance on the central plains of al-Haz.

The oldest, Badem ibn-Alihaba al-Asadel, is also personally the weakest. A nearsighted, balding man in his mid-40s, he has a strictly average intellect, and is infuriated that his father did not give him his "rightful due," although he had remained constantly by the old man's side. His greatest asset is his wife, a sharp diplomat with a great deal of common sense. He survived the initial infighting with the others thanks to her and the loyalty of his troops, and the Sultan granted him the title of Pasha out of respect for his seniority. The youngest, 40-year-old Denyz ibn-Alihaba al-Hassan, is wiser, with a strong sense of loyalty to the city. After deciding that his father had gone crazy in his old age, he played a defensive game in the conflict.

The great problem was the middle son, Fadil ibn-Alihaba al-Azim, a strong warrior with limited intelligence. Backed by loyal personal troops, he sought to outfight his older brother and take the city by force. The townsfolk hate him, and their representatives managed to convince the Sultan not to listen to him overmuch; he was obliged to accept the enforced peace. He then went off to fight in al-Wazif against Megalos, and came home, as he thought, a hero. His subsequent plots were exposed by Badem's wife and Denyz, and he and his followers had to flee from the Sultan's justice. His third of the city was then assigned to Badem.

Seeing himself as the victim of injustice and political chicanery, the embittered Fadil now roams the plains as an outlaw. He is supported by bandit gangs and petty rebels, who dream of having a free hand if he regains the city. He has also formed a tentative alliance with the Balikites; their leaders mistrust his motives, but see him as a useful tool.

He is rapidly building enough power to threaten to the city. This might not matter, except that Denyz has now fallen out with Badem's wife – neither ever quite trusted the other, despite their common interests – and Alhallabad may soon suffer another round of internal strife.

Al-Wazif

Al-Wazif is bordered on the east by the sea, on the south by al-Haz and Cardiel, on the west by the hilly Caithness badlands, and on the north by its perpetual enemy Megalos. It is the bulwark against which Megalan crusaders have thrown themselves for centuries. But its central position enriches it with trade by land and sea, while hundreds of years of hostility have hardened the borderlands. As it has demonstrated only recently, al-Wazif is well able to defend itself.

Geography

Most of al-Wazif is rolling grassland, hilly in the north, flattening out as one travels south and east. The northeastern seacoast is rocky and barren, providing few good harbors, but dozens of little outposts support fishermen who go out in tiny boats or cast their nets from the shore. Because of the difficulty of reaching these villages by land, most are self-sufficient. Thus, the rest of al-Wazif sees little seafood, though some small trading ships buy rare delicacies from these fisherman and resell them elsewhere at luxury prices.

There is very little forest in al-Wazif, so timber is in limited supply. What trees there are – mostly poplars and willows – grow in small stands along rivers and streams. The waist-high grass harbors wildlife aplenty, however. Antelope, wild horses, striders (p. 224) and bison are common. The herds are followed by lions, wolves, bushwolves (p. 219), and jackals. Quail, grouse, hawks, and a host of small mammals prosper as well.

Peasants in northern and eastern al-Wazif are primarily farmers. However, some Wazifis, especially in the southwest, still lead a nomadic lifestyle, albeit adapted to a more formal system of government. They roam one or more lords' lands with their herds, and pay annual taxes in cattle, hardings (p. 229), or horses. Both nomad and settled herdsmen raise all manner of livestock, while the soil and climate are suitable for many crops, especially grains.

Al-Wazif is a normal-mana area, dropping off to low in the western hills and badlands.

History

The Sunni Muslim tribesmen who dwelled in the hills and plains of central Ytarria first united to resist the threat of Megalos. In 1444, two years after the Shi'ite Muslims to the south had formed al-Haz, the northern tribes met for a fortnight of games, during which their best men competed in skill, strength, daring and cunning. The winner was named *Caliph*, a title which had originally meant the "deputy" and heir of the prophet on Earth, but which was now remembered simply as meaning a great ruler, Chosen of Allah. The losers swore to follow him to the death. Thus the nation of al-Wazif was born.

It bore the brunt of Megalan aggression for many years. Legions razed its towns and villages, and navies sacked its coasts. But the Wazifis stubbornly fought on, drawing on their southern brethren in al-Haz for reserves and supplies. When neighboring al-Kard was lost to the invaders, the Caliph took advantage of the short respite. By the time the Dragon once more turned its head

west, al-Wazif was more than ready. Great defensive siege works and bands of wizards made every inch of territory expensive. The war dragged on for a hundred years before Cardiel broke away and brought peace.

For the next two centuries, the Wazifis endured periodic invasions and border raids. But with each successive attempt, Megalan victories were fewer. The rebellion of Caithness, defeats in the north, and the growth of the Blackwoods all contributed to Wazifi security. Today, al-Wazif is a prosperous land.

Some 16 years ago, Caliph Ishaq ash-Sharif, a wise and tolerant monarch, died after an extended illness. His son by a full wife, Hafsa at-Talib ibn-Ishaq al-Wazifi ("Hafsa the Scholar, son of Ishaq, of al-Wazif"), succeeded him. The new Caliph was scholarly and easygoing, leaving many affairs of state to capable advisors. They told him to take advantage of apparent dissension within Megalos, by invading the Empire and winning glory for himself and followers for Islam. The Caliph vetoed these suggestions, unaware that a "war party" of generals, led by his own brother, had already set matters in motion.

Cynics say that the ensuing conflict was truly remarkable: a war in which Megalos was involved but not the aggressor. Al-Haz sent some aid to its Muslim co-religionists, including a token fighting force, but the Hazi captains could barely conceal their impatience with the impetuous and ill-timed Wazifi strategy. While they have no real grounds for complaint, militant Wazifis feel they were subtly betrayed. They had little surprise advantage; their preparations had been too obvious. Hence, after some early victories, Wazifi progress slowed, giving the ponderous Empire time to bring its full weight to bear. It is fortunate for al-Wazif that the war party was right about one thing; Megalan military skill is considerably overrated.

Frankly, neither side's commanders covered themselves in glory; the conflict reduced to a series of drawn battles punctuated by local victories which were as often as not reversed within a month. By the end, both sides were glowering at each other across a line of natural defensive positions, largely corresponding to the original border.

By now, the Caliph, who had at first been swept up in the enthusiasm of the initial advances, had worked out, in his intellectual way, that the war was achieving nothing – and the Megalan frontier lords proved willing to negotiate. A treaty was patched together, and both sides announced victory to their people.

Al-Wazif has recovered from the war impressively quickly; it really is a healthy, vibrant nation. However, this has given the "war party" new heart. The Megalan lords, not being entirely stupid, realize this, and are strengthening their defenses while dreaming of reclaiming lost territory – which looks like a threat to Wazifis. Several emirs acquired considerable power and influence during the war, and have not disbanded their armies. The politics of al-Wazif are currently dangerously unstable.

Society

Wazifi society is based on Muslim and tribal tradition, adapted for the modern world and with some foreign importations. See p. 48 for information on Islamic systems of government on Yrth, and note that Status is loosely linked to Administrative or Military Rank; the Status table for Yrthian Muslim societies is on p. 121.

Social Status

The ruler of al-Wazif is the Caliph, a hereditary monarch. His kingdom is divided into fiefdoms of various sizes,

Hafsa and Harun

As in al-Haz, power in al-Wazif is divided between hereditary and appointed leaders. The office of vizier is less important here; some court officials receive that title, but they are just civil servants, firmly under the authority of the Caliph.

The Caliph Hafsa at-Talib ibn-Ishaq al-Wazif is a thoughtful man of around 50. He has never been happy with his position; he would much rather devote his time to scholarship. But he is forever haunted by what his late father would think of him, and he has a serious sense of duty to his people. While his advisors long thought of him as a weakling, and many still do, he has proved that a good knowledge of history can be a real advantage to a ruler. He has been trained in administration and military skills, but he is actually an instinctive pacifist, who has never raised his sword in anger against another human being, and probably never could.

Hafsa's only wife died tragically young, and he spent many years deep in mourning. He has since sired two sons and two daughters with concubines, and the boys are being trained as his heirs, but they are still young, and would be in a very dangerous position if anything happened to their father.

Hafsa also has a half-brother, the Emir Harun abd Ishaq, son of one of his father's concubines and the governor of Qazr as-Sawh. Fortunately, Harun, a grizzled old warlord, is completely dedicated to al-Wazif, if not to Hafsa, and knows a civil war would be a gift to Megalos – and he assumes that Megalos is interested in nothing but destroying al-Wazif. He was largely responsible for triggering the Frontier Wars and led the army to its early victories, convincing Hafsa the war was necessary and victory was possible.

Unfortunately for him, the legions then arrived and stopped his advances, giving Hafsa time to look carefully at the situation and order truce negotiations. This confirmed to Harun that Hafsa was hopelessly weak; probably only the need to shore up the frontier prevented him from marching on the capital to seize the throne. Since the war ended, Harun has been rebuilding the army while demanding that he be given a free hand when it is ready. Hafsa now sees Harun as dangerous to the state and quite likely mad, and the two are barely on speaking terms.

governed by the descendants of the leaders of the first tribes established in the region. Al-Wazif has also adopted some of the chivalric traditions of its Megalan enemies and Cardien acquaintances; the Ghazi Orders (p. 70) are strong here. Even haughty Megalos acknowledges the honor of the Islamic "knights," and will generally treat them with chivalric respect on the field of battle.

Positions in the local system use a mishmash of Arabic and Turkish titles from Earth: Bey (Administrative Rank 6), Emir (Rank 5), Atabeg (Rank 4), Khedive (Rank 3), Ra'is (Rank 2), and so on. 'Amirs, military leaders approximating to knights, hold Military Rank 1-4 when serving in the Caliph's regular army; a Landed 'Amir, granted a holding sufficient to support himself and his military retinue, usually has Rank 2-3 and Status 2. A tribal sheikh usually has Status 2-3. As in Caithness, and reflecting the Islamic ideal of egalitarianism, almost any advance is possible to the talented or fortunate. Prowess with arms is particularly highly regarded; combined with skill in government and leadership, it will always win notice. As in al-Haz, wealth is respected as indicating a combination of talent and divine favor, and the commercially successful often advance by two or three Status levels in their lifetimes.

Also as in al-Haz, there are small Christian and Jewish communities in the cities. However, the local view of "People of the Book" is more benign; they do not depend so critically on the favor of a local governor, the extra taxes they pay are slightly less onerous than in al-Haz, and in tolerant areas, they only have Social Stigma (Second-Class Citizen).

Nonhumans

Few nonhumans are native to al-Wazif, although those that do live here are well enough treated. There are few elves, and almost no dwarves, but some halfling farming villages, and many goblin merchants in the cities. Almost all of these folk have accepted Islam, and some become mullahs or respected scholars.

Magic

Magic is entirely legal in al-Wazif, and mostly socially respectable; some ultra-conventional Muslims regard it as perhaps a little "ungodly," but even they will usually buy a healing or seeking spell when the need arises. Local wizards tend to be flashy and flamboyant. For some, this is a form of advertising; they hire out their services, and it helps if people have heard of them and think of them as "proper wizards." For others, it is simply a way of commanding admiration in a society which respects wealth. And some just enjoy dressing up and making magical fireworks.

By law, all trained wizards must spend two years in service to the Caliph; see p. 132. The pay is generous, and these wizards, being useful, are treated well and defended against incidental dangers, even in battle. Many choose to stay longer. Battle magic is particularly valued in perpetually besieged al-Wazif, as are magic items.

One of the Caliph's wizards' primary duties is the collection and manufacture of items appropriate for war. There are many stories of secret caches of powerful magical devices scattered around the country, to be distributed to the army in the event of invasion. Only a few such weapons were brought out during the recent

Frontier Wars, though, which leads some people to wonder if the stories are grossly exaggerated, and others to believe that the Caliph, having doubts about the war in the first place, preferred to keep such things back in case Megalos seriously threatened to turn the tide. There are even rumors that some caches have been lost or forgotten over the years; if this is true, preventing such things from falling into the wrong hands could be an important adventure. Of course, many PC parties might *be* the wrong hands.

The Law

As in al-Haz, law in al-Wazif is based on the Shari'a (p. 67). Unlike in al-Haz, however, the decrees of the ruler carry almost as much weight as the opinions of the mullahs. Since few Caliphs have been theologians, a secular legal tradition has grown up alongside the Shari'a. Usually, royal decrees clarify issues on which the traditions are vague.

At a slightly lower level, many local governors reserve the right to intercede in trials in their domains. They may pardon a person convicted by the cadis, or impose a harsher penalty, as they see fit. Calling upon a local lord for mercy is risky, but sometimes worth trying.

As a result, Islamic legal principles tend to be observed less strictly here than in al-Haz. Alcohol is grudgingly permitted among the Christian and Jewish minorities, in private, though public drunkenness is *not*, and foreign women may go unveiled without fear of arrest or stoning. Of course, people who think the law doesn't apply to them are in for a rude surprise.

Warfare

The Caliph maintains a standing army, almost all garrisoned along the northern border. Every lord also has his own troops, with the northern border lords requiring much larger armies. Forces are a mixture of quasi-feudal 'amirs, ghazis serving for faith or plunder, and mercenaries: often younger sons of the ruling classes, or former nomads parlaying their traditional skills into a place in more sophisticated society. A good mercenary can always find work in al-Wazif, *provided* he can find someone to vouch for him. Wazifis are particularly wary of hiring a Megalan in disguise. That trick has worked too often.

The southern border is essentially undefended, at least in comparison to the north. Ongoing rivalries between Shi'ite and Sunni tribesmen have caused some minor skirmishes, but as neither the Sultan nor the Caliph wish for war, these incidents are ignored.

Occasionally, the nobles of al-Wazif turn their armies on one another, just like the lords of Caithness and Megalos. The constant threat from Megalos, however, and the truly barbaric punishments the Caliph traditionally invents for traitors, keep bickering to a minimum. Only four times in the last century has a fiefdom changed hands through violence, and one of the new lords kept his head for only a fortnight thereafter.

Forces are mostly cavalry, with some mercenary infantry serving as garrison troops; wiser leaders also use units of infantry to support their skilled but wild horsemen. In emergencies, peasants are sometimes called up and mustered into blocks of spearmen, but these are understandably timid, given their lack of training or military traditions, and are usually more trouble than they are worth. Some clever commanders order them to construct field fortifications, after which they are sent home, or at least moved well out of the way.

Wazifi armies include an effective, if poorly organized, corps of wizards. These are not the specialist battle-wizards of Megalos, and hence are less useful, man for man, under routine circumstances – but many of them are highly competent generalists. Because their abilities reflect their personal interests rather than formal training, they are unpredictable; some are weak, but others can surprise a foe.

Hisham ash-Sharib

The second leader of the Wazifi "war party" is the talented, charismatic Bey of Shaniyabad, who in his youth won the Great Games. Convinced by his good luck and the adulation of his people that he is destined to rule the land, Hisham actually made the war unavoidable by secretly sending agents to spread rumors of Wazifi activity in Megalos. He expected Megalos to attack, and planned to lead his forces to save the day, at which point his agent at court would assassinate the Caliph and he would take the throne by acclamation.

Unfortunately, Harun abd Ishaq spoiled that twice over, first by starting the war with an attack on Megalos and becoming the hero of the hour, and then, when Hisham tried to improvise a variant plan, by slaying the assassin. Harun assumes that the killer was a Megalan agent; Hafsa has doubts, and has found out a little about Hisham's other activities. Hisham is becoming painfully aware that the Caliph regards him with deep suspicion. His advantages – including his respectable war record – will not protect him forever, and his treason may be exposed. He is currently trying to work out how to eliminate the entire royal family in one stroke.

Hisham is still something of an athlete at the age of 40, and his problem is overconfidence, not a lack of actual intelligence; he has carefully built up a huge network of spies and agents, and would make a formidable enemy to anyone who lacked the evidence to expose him to the Caliph. His other notable feature is his coloring; Hisham's red hair and green eyes suggest that he has a foreign slave in his recent ancestry, a fact which it is unwise to remark upon anywhere in Shaniyabad.

Adventuring in al-Wazif

Al-Wazif is Yrth's "Arabian Nights" location – colorful and dynamic, with lots of high-powered magic, merchant caravans, and court intrigue. Flying carpets are definitely part of the furniture. However, there is more to the

The Great Games

The Great Games of al-Wazif are held each spring, in commemoration of those that selected the first Caliph. Competitions include wrestling, combat with blunted swords and other weapons, jousting, hunting and hawking, chess, magic, acrobatics, extemporaneous poetry, musical performance, and many others.

One of the greatest contests is called simply the Dare. It is essentially "follow-the-leader" for brave adults. A competitor is picked by lot, and performs some feat of his own choosing – anything not immoral or illegal. All other competitors must attempt the feat or drop out. Success is not necessary, but an honest attempt is required, and use of magic is not allowed.

Thus, contestants will choose feats like wild bull riding, axe juggling, or bare-handed wolf-slaying. A panel of judges determines when a failed attempt is genuine; a panel of mages and physicians works to save injured competitors. Anyone requiring this sort of emergency aid, of course, is out of the game.

When the first round is over, another contestant is picked, and the Dare continues – until only one is able to go on. GMs and players can have a lot of fun coming up with unusual dares . . .

Outsiders and foreigners are welcome to compete. There is no quicker way for a newcomer to al-Wazif to earn fame and fortune. Prizes are grand, as is the honor to be won. It is unusual, but not illegal, for a woman to enter the Games; conservative mullahs will object, but a persistent and diplomatic female will be allowed to compete unless the judges' reaction to her is Poor or worse. A woman who wins will be the subject of controversy, but will receive great honor!

place than cliche; it is, among other things, a crossroads between several other ambitious powers, with ambitious lords of its own. It has been a war zone only recently, and can be used as easily for gritty thrillers as for romantic tales. Players may search for the rumored caches of the Caliph or investigate the ruins of Autheuil (p. 135).

Some other adventure possibilities:

Caravan Guards: In this trading nation, a caravan might head off in any direction. Trips through the Caithness badlands or to the Great Forest – low-mana areas infested with monsters – can be especially dangerous.

Stop the Slavers: Megalan slave-takers raid al-Wazif both overland and by sea. The best way to stop them is likely to involve small, mobile, responsive forces, rather than cumbersome military units.

Bodyguards: With Hashishin and Balikite fanatics around, not to mention all the court intrigue, a "simple" bodyguard job can all too easily turn complicated.

Spy-Counterspy: Megalos has agents all through al-Wazif. So does Hisham ash-Sharib, and both Cardiel and al-Haz keep an eye on things. The Caliph may be a mild-mannered pacifist, but he's more than smart enough to hire secret help, given that he can't even trust his own brother. And these networks run with real subtlety; anyone who is recruited may not even be working for whoever they *think* is paying them.

Cities of Al-Wazif

Wazifi culture has become highly urbanized over the centuries. The nomad life is respected in the abstract, but even the poets who wax eloquent about the beauties of the desert mostly prefer to do so in a comfortable court – and peasants are, while not usually deliberately oppressed, very much at the bottom of the heap. They are ruled from the towns and cities, which flourish on taxes and trade.

As-Siyassi

As-Siyassi, on the shores of lake Bir Maj'in, is one of the oldest human cities on Yrth. Founded in 1074, it was for centuries the sole metropolis for hundreds of miles in any direction. It served as the cultural, religious and economic center for what was to become al-Wazif. The northern Muslim tribes met there for the first Great Games in 1435, and as-Siyassi became the capital of the new nation.

Today, the Wazifi capital is more prosperous than ever. Unlike most of the plains, its fields of wheat and corn are well irrigated. Orchards of olive, peach, fig, and almond trees adorn the green landscape.

As-Siyassi is also a center of culture. It boasts one of Yrth's greatest universities, several colleges of the wizardly arts, and many artists, poets and philosophers. Under the patronage of the scholarly Caliph, the arts are flourishing as never before. Learned men from all over Yrth – Christian, Jew, and Muslim – gather here to study and exchange ideas.

Shaniyabad

Shaniyabad is the busiest port in al-Wazif, and the richest. Any trade which comes into or leaves as-Siyassi by sea passes through here. River barges link the city with as-Siyassi and the interior. Al-Wazif does not have a large navy, so the port is protected by strong magical safeguards and numbers of mercenaries. The lands around Shaniyabad are fertile and well watered, and mostly used for crops rather than livestock; most meat is imported. In addition, the hills northwest of the city contain al-Wazif's most important mines, which yield silver, iron, and tin in large quantities.

Shaniyabad's bey is Hisham ash-Sharib, a one-time ornament of the Caliph's court and winner of the Great Games, greatly loved by his subjects; see p. 132.

Because the Megalan border is heavily guarded, southeastern Caithness is low-mana badlands, and al-Haz is hostile to mages, Shaniyabad is a likely point of exit for wizards dodging mandatory service to the Caliph. Of course, the authorities know this full well, and will look here for wizardly fugitives.

North Tredroy

See p. 142 for details of all three parts of this city. North Tredroy is seen in the rest of al-Wazif as something of a hotbed of sin. Even by fairly relaxed Wazifi standards, it has a casual attitude to religious observances and a largely secular legal system.

Sa'Azraq

The Emirate of Sa'Azraq is al-Wazif's easternmost fiefdom. The port city of Azraq is located on a peninsula, midway between Hadaton to the south and Yibyorak to the north, and is al-Wazif's only decent harbor east of Shaniyabad. Many ships stop there, but few stay long. Sa'Azraq is populated by farmers and fisherman, and has little to offer in the way of trade.

Because of Azraq's remoteness and proximity to Megalos, the people of its villages often fall prey to Christian slavers. Many a Muslim mother has seen daughters carried off while her husband was out fishing. Of course, at the same time, quite a few Muslim slavers use the area as a base for raids on Megalos. This ultimately led to the curious situation of Taveon of Dekamera; see *The Treachery of Taveon*.

Gebel Thamad

The city of Gebel Thamad began as a way station on the Pilgrims' Road to the holy city Geb'al-Din. The lands around it were parched, so its springs drew nomadic herdsmen and weary travelers alike. Later, it became a major trading center, situated as it was at the intersection of the north-south caravan route and the timber trail linking the Great Forest and as-Siyassi. Today, under the leadership of the governor, Khedive Amin al-Burum, the City at the Crossroads is one of the most prosperous in al-Wazif.

Trade is Gebel Thamad's lifeblood; anything that threatens the caravan routes threatens the city's very existence. The local lords take banditry very seriously. Mercenaries can always find work here, either with the forces of the Khedive or as caravan guards. Bounty hunters are also in demand, and will find that both the aristocracy and the merchants pay handsomely.

A few years ago, a woodcutting expedition discovered old ruins in the forest. The curious woodcutters laid down their axes to explore further. What they found was the remains of an ancient fortress-town. They discovered no treasure, but they did turn up a large stone block bearing inscriptions not only in Arabic, but in Latin and Norman French as well! They returned to Gebel Thamad with their lumber and this curiosity.

Since then, several expeditions have ventured into the woods to examine this discovery further, under the sponsorship and leadership of various wizards, scholars, and treasure-hunters. One of the first things that became clear was that the woods around the ruins were peculiarly short of game or even edible plants; anyone planning to explore them for very long has to take substantial supplies. Almost as quickly, the explorers found that, while the mana level in the ruins is *mostly* low, there are small patches with other levels, as well as some where it fluctuates unpredictably. Unfortunately, the most common alternate levels are No Mana and Very High Mana, making life complicated for adventuring wizards.

Some expeditions have returned with new clues as to the nature of the ruins; some have found nothing before their food ran out and they had to return to the city. A few have turned up modest amounts of loot – mostly ancient coins – which encourages others. Some have run into formidable and unusually touchy natural predators. One or two have failed to return at all. Most are motivated by

The Treachery of Taveon

In the tensions leading up to the Frontier Wars, some slave-raids against Sa'Azraq were actually led by Megalan nobles, who felt justified in making a profit from harassing the infidel. This led to disaster when the Emir Ayyub ibn-Qasim al-Azraq captured Taveon, the eldest son of Earl Gavin of Dekamera, in battle. Ayyub demanded a huge ransom for the prisoner, intending to use it to purchase back as many of his enslaved citizens as possible. Instead of paying, the parsimonious Gavin hired mercenary agents to recover his son; they failed, and then the wars started. The only reason that Ayyub refrained from hanging Taveon from his city walls was that he hoped to use him as a bargaining counter. Indeed, the danger to Taveon perhaps kept the Sa'Azraq coast safer than it would otherwise have been.

Shortly after peace was restored, Gavin died, an embittered old man. Meanwhile, Ayyub had come to like Taveon, and thought they had reached a degree of understanding approaching friendship. Taveon was learning to appreciate Wazifi culture; Ayyub even entertained hopes that the lad might convert to Islam. So, as a gesture of courtesy and peaceful intent, the Wazifis released Taveon to claim his earldom.

This was a disastrous miscalculation. Taveon feels humiliated. He'd been prevented from seeing his father before the old man died, he'd been held in embarrassing comfort while his nation was at war, and when he got home, people sniggered at his "Wazifi" manners. His anger has turned outwards, and he is organizing further raids, trying to live up to his father's memory. This is public knowledge, and Ayyub now sees him as an ungrateful barbarian wretch. Taveon secretly feels guilty, and misses some Wazifis and their culture. But his anger is in the way – and his neighbors still mock him behind his back for his slight Wazifi accent and lack of practice at handling his drink.

The high-minded Ayyub not only feels personally betrayed, but his mistake has damaged his popularity with his people. Once the raids start, things will become even worse. Taveon will be violating the treaty terms, and the Wazifis will see him and his troops as oath-breakers as well as slavers. All this may wreck any hope of long-term peace.

The Ruins of Autheuil

The ruins in the Great Forest near Gebel Thamad are the ancient city of Autheuil. The story of its fall was once well known, but has been forgotten. Among humans, only an unread scroll in the library of the Muslim University in as-Siyassi, and perhaps inscriptions at the ruins themselves, tell anything of the tale. Some older elves know slightly more, but the subject is a taboo among that race.

Autheuil was the first true human city on Yrth, founded in 1068. It was populated by folk of many nationalities and religions, united by their common experience – being wrenched from their homes by the Banestorm and deposited in a strange and hostile land. It prospered for many years; elves from the Great Forest gave food to the humans, and instructed them in the basics of magic and the dangers of Yrth. The humans hunted in the wood, and felled only enough trees to grow crops sufficient to feed themselves. Eventually, they made contact with villages of other humans north of the Forest, and with Muslim tribes to the east. Trade brought Autheuil wealth. The city began to grow, requiring the felling of more and more trees.

Meanwhile, European-descended humans in Autheuil began to dabble in the darker magical arts. Others, mainly Muslims, objected strenuously, insisting that only evil would come of it. Then, the elves of the forest arrived at the gates of the city. They said that too many trees had been cut down, and that the fields thus cleared must be abandoned so that the forest might heal itself. The people of Autheuil were outraged, and several of the wizards used their powers to drive the elves from the gates, killing many.

Made bold by their success, the wizards delved deeper into new realms of magic. Many feared retribution from the elves, and sought magical weapons or spells with which to protect themselves. Meanwhile, Muslim mullahs and Christian priests predicted disaster, and many townsfolk fled. Other leaders tried to prevent the exodus, saying every man was needed to defend the walls. A riot ensued, the fighting escalated, and when matters calmed down again, most of Autheuil's Muslims and many other citizens were either slain or fled.

What happened next is unknown. Perhaps the elves returned and massacred the exhausted defenders. Perhaps the wizards found their weapon, and were unable to control it. The fact is, no human ever heard from Autheuil again, and few elves were left to tell what they might know. None live in the area today, and nobody has thought to send to the nearest elven communities to ask about the topic. Whatever happened, there were apparently no survivors. Furthermore, the ruins were left under a "curse" – perhaps a great hostile magic deliberately worked by the elves, perhaps a disastrous side-effect of magical battles, perhaps a chaotic mingling of several effects. Untended, the fields and ruins were reclaimed by the forest, and have sat undisturbed . . . until now.

The Curse of Autheuil

The remnants of the "curse" have several effects. One is the reduced and unstable local mana level. Another is that non-sapient animals find the entire area disquieting – nothing very immediate, just enough to deter most from staying for long. High natural aggression tends to overcome the effect, so predators sometimes lair in the ruins, though they have to range widely in search of food, and are often hungry enough to attack humans. Also, only plants that are inedible for humans will grow near the place.

This means that Survival rolls made in or near the ruins are at -8; this penalty is reduced by 1 for each mile from the site. Also, riding or draft animals taken into the ruins become skittish; apply a -1 penalty to Animal Handling or Riding rolls for every two full days that they have been on site, to a maximum of -5, until they are taken at least 10 miles away for at least a week.

Other, weirder effects of the curse may be determined by the GM, as may other dangers and wonders to be found in the lost city. It is entirely possible that there are undiscovered catacombs full of traps, undead guardians, and the occasional magical device with unpredictable powers. There may also be grimoires full of the knowledge which the wizards were investigating . . .

intellectual curiosity, or at least involve reasonably moral individuals, and hence will collaborate with each other if they meet on site, but there are a few increasingly bitter academic rivalries involved. Worse, some parties of ruthless, selfish plunderers have passed through Gebel Thamad. It is entirely possible that some of the disappearances have been caused by competition turning violent, but that would *not* explain them all.

It is entirely possible that there are undiscovered catacombs full of traps, undead guardians, and the occasional magical device with unpredictable powers.

Meanwhile, scholars pore over the archaic language of the original inscribed stone and some other finds from the site, and search through ancient records and tales from the region, trying to work out what this place *was*. No one has reached a proven conclusion yet, although there are hints in old records that human settlement in the area does go a long way back. An old Shi'ite diatribe against magic refers to the "Accursed City of the Devil"; on the other hand, some of the inscriptions, when translated, imply a friendly relationship between Arabic-speakers and French-speakers, with commercial agreements, shared laws, and even intermarriage.

Qazr as-Sawh

Nestled among rolling hills overlooking the River Conn, Qazr as-Sawh is the largest city in northern al-Wazif, and the strongpoint of the northern defenses. Every acre of land is used – if not for growing wheat or olive trees, then as forage for hardings and woolens (p. 229). This is necessary to support the garrisons of the many castles that dot the landscape.

The folk of Qazr as-Sawh are accustomed to war. The city's walls have withstood countless sieges; its citizens proudly boast that no hostile army has ever passed through its gates. Yet Qazr as-Sawh is also a city of trade. The goods of Caithness and Craine pass down the Conn, and on to Bannock and Keyhole Bay; Wazifi exports travel in the opposite direction. The folk of Megalos and al-Wazif have an understanding: in anything short of open warfare, the river that marks the border is neutral territory.

The Caliph's half-brother, the Emir Harun abd Ishaq (see p. 131), is governor of Qazr as-Sawh. The citizens are proud of their soldier-lord, but have noted that his preparations for war bring them difficulties. When Kharijite warriors stride the city streets, anyone can guess that trouble is coming.

Rumors say that one of the Caliph's principal caches of magical items (p. 131) is located in the hills southwest of the city. Of course, assuming that it even exists, the cache is bound to be guarded by arcane and terrible magics.

Bannock

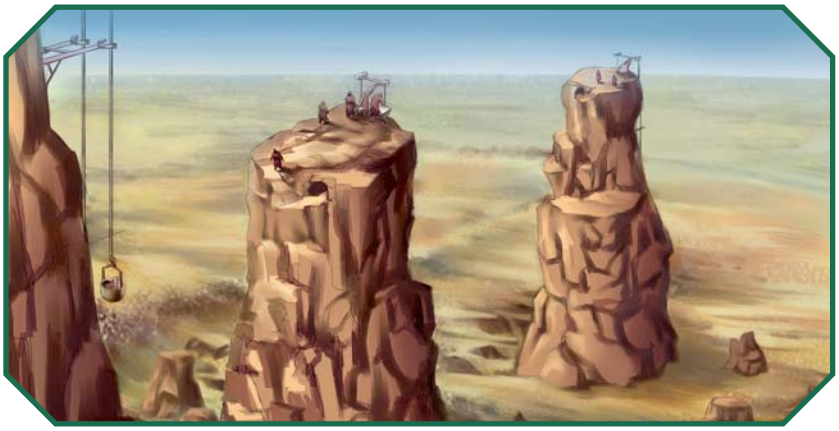
Since the Frontier Wars (p. 16), the formerly Megalan city of Bannock has once again become a possession of al-Wazif. It had changed hands at least six times before in the last 200 years, and the population make grim jokes and secret bets about when they will once again be subjects of Megalos.

Situated at the mouth of the River Conn, Bannock supports itself by international trade, making war even more unpopular with its people. Its population is mixed Christian and Moslem, with enough of each to make forced conversions impossible without mass slaughter – which has slipped out of fashion in recent centuries, most of the time. Thus, Bannock held both mosques and churches even when it was a Megalan city, although both have suffered from harassment by zealots of the ruling religion at different times.

Bannock is also used to absentee government; the family of the original Earls of Bannock was wiped out and their keep leveled by Wazifis during the Mages' War, and the noble who held the title most recently, Barris Tremaine, never even visited his holding, but remained as near to the Emperor as possible. He is still in the capital, agitating for a war of revenge against al-Wazif, and dreaming that his first arrival to "his" city will be as a savior-hero. In fact, before the Frontier Wars, the city was actually governed and run by a chartered council of merchant guilds.

Bannock suffered in the Frontier Wars; it fell quickly to the first Wazifi assault. Although Wazifi commanders managed to restrain their forces from pillage, there were a large number of Kharijites among the invaders with little respect for either Christians or Muslim "backsliders." Then the city came under Megalan siege for years, and although some Wazifi forces managed to drive through the Megalan lines with much-needed supplies, the people inevitably went very hungry for long periods.

Today, the city still has much of the air of occupied territory, under mostly-military government. The merchant council is seeking to have its status restored and confirmed by the new rulers, but this of course takes time. The Wazifis are trying to govern lightly, to convince the people of their benevolence, but the message has not always reached the troops. The people are unsure whether they would prefer to make the best of the new situation or whether they dream of a restoration of the old rule, and rifts are growing in previously amicable relationships between Christians and Muslims.



The Pillars of Heaven

On the western border of al-Wazif, at the very edge of the badlands technically belonging to Caithness, stand the Pillars of Heaven. Hundreds of wind-sculpted columns of rock tower over the plain below. The greatest are several hundred feet tall, and at their summits generations of Sufi holy men (p. 7) have made their homes. The Pillars are held in reverence second only to Geb'al-Din itself.

The communities on the Pillars are not monasteries or abbeys; the mystics carve hovels out of the rock itself. They live in abject poverty and isolation. What food and water they require is hauled up from the valley below with ropes and buckets, and for that they are wholly dependent upon the pilgrims who come seeking enlightenment. Should war, famine, pestilence or bad weather prevent pilgrims from coming for a time, the hermits must fast, or bring themselves to come down from the Pillars and see to their own needs.

The most revered of the holy men is Rhazi as-Safa, a Sufi of tremendous age. It is said that he was once a great nobleman, a Bey of al-Wazif, and a victor in the Great Games. Very few folk know for sure – Rhazi has dwelled at the Pillars for over 80 years. Most reckon him to be at least 100 years old.

Forty years ago, disciples of Rhazi gathered his sayings into a single book. In his youth, the current Caliph was rarely without a copy, and made several pilgrimages to speak with the old man. Indeed, some blame Hafsa's "unmanly" ways on the holy man's influence.

Great Rivers of Yrth

With no rails and frequently poor roads, the rivers of Ytarria are often its main highways. Wherever navigable, each is covered with barges, boats, and ships filled with trade goods and food. Despite having the best roads on the continent, even bustling Megalos depends on river commerce; between Keyhole Bay, Lake Acheron, Lake Styx, and the rivers that connect them, it is laced with waterways. The other great nations primarily depend on one or two rivers.

The Blueshoal

This river runs through Gebel-Thamad, along the al-Haz-al-Wazif border, to Tredroy and then along the Cardiel-al-Wazif border to the sea at Hadaton. The Lorian, which marks part of the Cardiel-al-Haz border, is its major tributary, joining it in Tredroy. All the cities along its length as well as nearby Calder are major trading towns. As with the Conn, the bulk of the traders are human; here, they are mostly Muslim. A significant portion of the downriver trade is timber and woodcrafts from the Great Forest and its surrounding communities. There is also a constant flow of food to Tredroy, keeping that huge city fed.

The Conn

The River Conn begins in the mountains of Zarak, winds through half of Caithness, then passes through four major cities in Megalos and al-Wazif before emptying into Keyhole Bay. Its largest tributary is the Smoke, which also runs through Caithness into Megalos. The Conn is vital to trade in the two human countries, and only slightly less important to the Zarakun. They deliver their ores and metalwork to human traders in the upper reaches. Lower down, most of the cargo is foodstuffs heading for Megalos, or goods coming upriver. Many of the traders who work across the border are Megalan goblins.

Cardiel

Bounded on the north and west by Muslim realms and on the south and east by ocean, Cardiel is a product of the Megalan crusades. First a land of Muslim tribesmen, then an Imperial province, now an independent country, Cardiel is a cultural hybrid. Though nominally Christian, it is the most tolerant of the countries of Ytarria, home to Christians, Muslims, Jews, and pagans alike.

In addition to their religious tolerance, Cardiens are politically independent. Cardiel has no king; instead, the Cardien nobles choose a prince, reserving the right to depose him should the position go to his head. To date, there has never been a female prince. Though fractious, the nobles would readily join together to preserve Cardiel's sovereignty. Through diligence and friendly relations with its neighbors, Cardiel has enjoyed many years of peace.

Cardiel is a cultural melting pot. The majority of the people and almost all of the nobility are Christian, but there are significant Muslim and pagan minorities. Some of the richest merchants and craftsmen are followers of Islam. Many nobles reside in villas decorated with arches, tiles, and murals in Muslim geometric styles, rather than old stone castles from the violent past. Arabic, not Latin, is the scholarly language, and aristocrats are more likely to know it than the tongue of the Church. In addition, there are a variety of local dialects, and some Cardiens speak derivatives of German, Italian, Spanish, Gaelic, and Ukrainian better than Anglish.

Geography

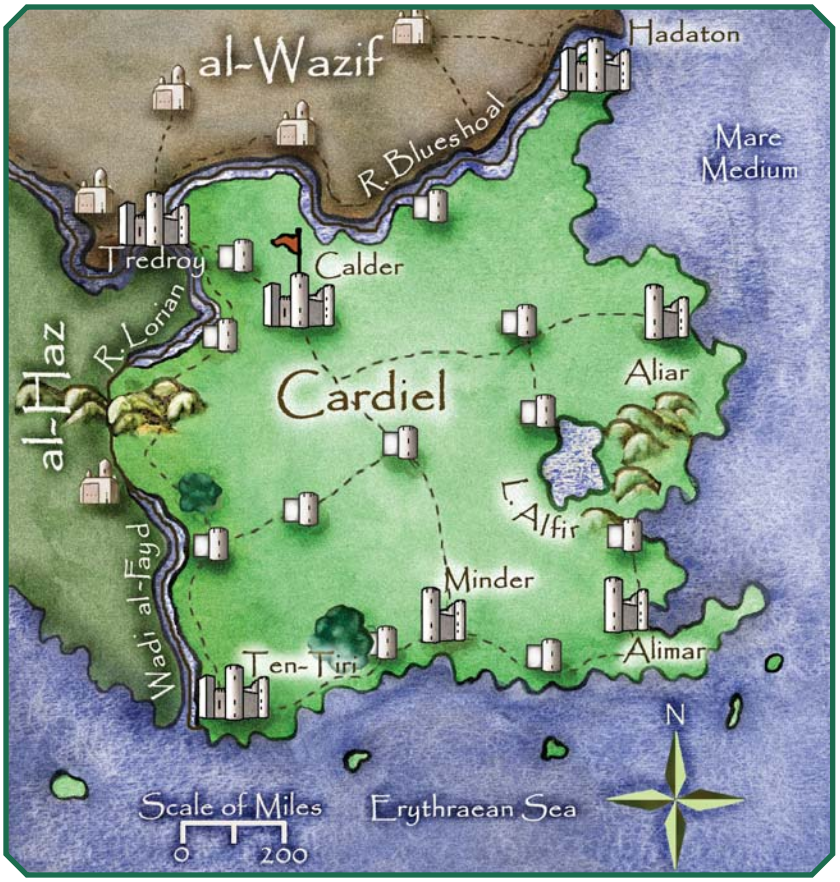
The northern Cardien coast is rugged, with few good harbors among the cliffs save Hadaton. Cardiel's other shores are quite hospitable. Cardiel has a fine navy and large merchant and fishing fleets. The land is fertile, flat inland and gently rolling near the coasts.

The largest cities are on the seacoasts, except for Tredroy, sited where Cardiel meets al-Haz and al-Wazif, and central Calder. The rest of the countryside is well-farmed, less populous than eastern Megalos, but more so than most other lands. Its roads are second only to the Megalan Great Roads (p. 83).

The climate is mild, with warm weather and gentle winters, and the coastal hills soften the sea storms. Rainfall is heaviest in the east and south, but the inland plains are not parched, unlike some parts of al-Haz. Most crops can grow there, and Cardiel is Ytarria's largest source of citrus fruits. The vineyards of Cardiel are renowned for producing Ytarria's finest wines.

There are no great forests in Cardiel, and few woods; most of the land is pasture or cultivated, with salt marshes and rocky moorlands in some coastal areas. Large wild beasts are rare, so hawking is more popular than hunting with hounds.

The western and central plains are famous for fine cattle and large herds of woolens. Some of the softest and warmest wool is Cardien, and its cities are home to excellent leatherworkers.



History

A thousand years ago, the southeastern portion of Ytarria was sparsely inhabited, save for isolated elven communities and gnome villages. Even after the Banestorm, this area remained largely empty. Around 1200, Muslim tribesmen began to move into the region, seeking new pastures for their herds. More humans moved east from the arid plains over the next hundred years, gradually filling up the new territory. Many were Sunni Muslims, seeking a land of their own away from the Shi'ite stronghold of the west (pp. 120-121). Even so, the land was sparsely populated compared to the west and north.

In 1445, in response to the Megalan crusades, the nation of al-Kard was born. The Kardis were never as unified as the other Muslim countries. Their self-proclaimed Sultan, Said ibn-Mahmud, had to work hard to convince rival sheikhs of the danger facing them. Through skilled diplomacy and scarcely veiled threats he won the allegiance of the major tribes.

However, al-Kard was barely touched by the Megalans until almost 20 years later. By then, Said had died, and a half-dozen sheiks, including Said's son, were embroiled in a war of succession. The Megalan fleets landed at the Blueshoal River, and the crusaders began their invasion of the divided country. Within 10 years they conquered much of al-Kard. After 20 years the entire nation was under Megalan rule. The Imperials renamed it the province of Cardiel, and the Emperor appointed a viceroy.

Megalos promptly opened the land to colonization. Second sons and power-hungry nobles brought their subjects to the new province, sometimes transplanting entire villages. The Megalan government granted land to many legionnaires who had fought in the Crusades. By the late 1400s, Cardiel was heavily populated and intensely farmed. The remaining Muslims, whose lifestyle depended on miles of open plains, had little choice but to emulate the invaders, and founded villages of their own.

In 1499, the new ruler of the city of Calder forced its still predominately Muslim inhabitants to convert to Christianity overnight, executing all who refused. Soldiers under his command destroyed every mosque and put hundreds of mullahs and prominent Muslims to death. This only served to inflame Kardi resistance. The resulting riots and borderline revolts caused ripples felt all the way to Megalos, and future rulers learned a lesson in tolerance. Rigid and uncompromising lords withered, while prosperity came to those who treated their Muslim subjects wisely. They found the tribesmen honest, brave in battle, and skilled as herders. Muslim craftsmen and scholars had preserved Earth knowledge forgotten elsewhere. The houses of these tolerant nobles did well; they inherited Cardiel.

Over the next two centuries, the nobility of Cardiel became a part of their land, sometimes marrying the daughters of influential Muslim families. Sporadic war continued against al-Haz and al-Wazif, but Muslim efforts to liberate al-Kard found less support within Cardiel. The Cardiens developed a true multicultural society as conflicts with their neighbors became less frequent.

Eventually, the Cardien nobles realized they had more in common with the enemy than the motherland. In 1784, they declared independence, chose a leader, and made peace with the Muslim countries. After a brief but bloody attempt to recapture the wayward province, Megalos was

forced to acquiesce. The ships that had taken al-Kard were loyal to Cardiel, and the new country had support from al-Haz and al-Wazif. However, the Duchy of Hadaton remained Megalan for 20 years, until Cardiel took it by force, with the help of the Caliph of al-Wazif.

The current Prince of Cardiel is Crivelli of Hadaton, who has only held the position for a year. Relatively young at 35, he is a schemer who plans to hold the office for a long time to come. Some of his fellow nobles suspect he had the previous Prince, Allan Micardene, assassinated, possibly in collusion with Viscount Guillaume. In fact, Micardene died of old age, but the mere rumor has made Crivelli's support somewhat unstable.

Society

A loose federation of lords, led by the Prince, rules Cardiel. The Prince's title is not hereditary; the greatest nobles elect one of their own to the post for life – or until they grow tired of him. The Prince has the power to tax nobles and to judge their disputes. He also commands Cardiel's two legions. In theory, he is the liege of the other lords; in practice, he is simply the first among proud and well-armed equals.

Furthermore, Cardiel has a well-established "Commoners' Council," elected by a rough-and-ready sort of democracy among the land's freemen and knights, whose task is to advise the Prince. While it has no active power as such, its members have enough influence that only a foolish leader ignores them. Hence, most lords spend some of their time seeking to manipulate or corrupt members of the Council, while ordinary Cardiens try to make friends with its members or gain a seat themselves to gain the Prince's ear.

Social Rank

Cardiel uses much the same hierarchy of titles and Status as Megalos (see p. 87), but with occasional borrowings from the Hazi/Wazifi system. The Prince is only Status 6, but is generally accepted as an equal by the rulers of all countries save Megalos.

Social advancement in Cardiel is almost as limited as in Megalos, but for different reasons. The lack of a wilderness frontier, and two centuries of peace, mean that escaped serfs, villeins, and noble younger children have nowhere to start a new life. Society considers the Megalan practice of buying social rank the epitome of bad taste. Still, Cardien nobles are not as haughty as their Megalan counterparts, and bravery, skill, or extreme loyalty are often rewarded.

Nonhumans

Before the humans, this region was home to few intelligent beings. There were, and still are, several small elven communities along the southern coasts and offshore islands. Gnomes once lived in the western hills, but most have long since moved to quieter parts. The cities, by contrast, are as cosmopolitan as those of Megalos. Dwarven smiths ply their trade, goblin merchants sell their wares, and kobold thieves work the crowds. Even an occasional orc or reptile man can be seen.

Magic

Cardiel is a normal-mana region with minor local variations, particularly along the south coast near the high-mana Ring Islands. Cardien wizards enjoy more freedom than in the Muslim countries, but less respect than in Megalos. More freedom means more opportunities to cause spectacular backfires, and both commoners and nobility often regard wizards as slightly unhinged and engaged in a dangerous profession.

Warfare

Cardiel is a maritime power, renowned for its sea-traders and fishermen. Its navy, mainly small, fast ships with a few huge war-galleys, is second only to that of Megalos – inferior in numbers, but superior in skill and daring. It is supported through taxes collected by the lords. Thus, though it technically answers to the Prince, the individual lords control the purse strings and occasionally use "their" ships for personal projects. Megalan raiders occasionally visit the Cardien coast, but have learned such ventures aren't worth the cost. By contrast, Cardien pirates freely prey on Megalan traders.

Other than such raiding, Cardiel sees little warfare. The last major war, with al-Wazif, was over 150 years ago, and was little more than a dispute between two nobles on opposite sides of the border. A smaller Hazi "jihad" occurred 70 years ago, and was even briefer.

Cardiel's internal politics are peaceful on a large scale; political violence is far more likely to be man-to-man. However, nobles do keep guard-forces, and can raise armies through levies and by calling on their knights. The Prince has two legions, but they are rusty and shoddy compared to those of Megalos. They are funded from the taxes he receives from the lords, and out of his pocket.

The Law

The Cardien legal system is a jurisdictional nightmare. The Shari'a code, Church canon law, Jewish tradition, and remnants of Megalan common law all exist side by side. Frequently, minor crimes go unpunished when there is a risk of offending one group or another.

In general, each religion polices its own members. Problems arise when a Christian is accused of violence against a Muslim, or a Jew commits a crime against a pagan. Clever criminals manipulate the system to their benefit, especially in Tredroy, with its international borders. Final legal authority rests with the Prince and other powerful nobles, but they try not to anger their subjects by overturning the decisions of lesser courts.

Names in Cardiel

Any name appropriate in neighboring nations may be appropriate for a Cardien. Sometimes elements from different cultures are combined (e.g., Baron Amalric ibn-John at-Ten-Tiri).

The Lords

The Council of Lords is a federation of the seven greatest Cardien nobles. Led by the Prince, whom they elect from among themselves, they govern in a style often more selfish than harmonious. Crivelli and Baron Saywell of Alimar form one bloc, Count Faramon of Aliar and Baron Caius of Minder another. Baron Vincent of Calder, the former prince, got Crivelli into office but is starting to distrust him. Viscount Guillaume of Tredroy would probably fall in with Crivelli, given the opportunity. Baron Amalric of Ten-Tiri sees himself as a power of one, and could ally the same way as Vincent, whom he trusts, or Guillaume, to whom he has economic ties.

Prince Anthemius Crivelli

The power-hungry former Duke of Hadaton has been Prince for only a year. He won the election with the support of Baron Vincent and Baron Saywell. Viscount Guillaume and Count Faramon split the remaining votes.

Shamelessly manipulative and moderately amoral, he seems more suited to the court intrigue of Megalos than the rough diplomacy of Cardiel. However, he has convinced several other lords that he is smarter, more friendly, or more powerful than he actually is. This house of cards may turn into an actual power base, or it may collapse around him.

The various legal codes of Cardiel are generally similar to those of other kingdoms, particularly Caithness and al-Wazif. There are three unique customs, however. First, religious freedom is assured. In Cardiel, no religion is outlawed, and mosques and churches stand side by side. Even pagans meet openly. Displays of intolerance lead to charges of disturbing the peace. No one is immune. This caused the secularization of the Order of Michael (p. 64) after the rebellion, and the expulsion of the Hospitallers (p. 62) 60 years later.

Second, there is no death by torture. Instead,the worst criminals go to the Mages' Guild for experimentation. Most Cardiens regard this as humane. After all, one or two out of every hundred survive.

Lastly, there is no slavery. With each change of government, the issue of who it was legal or even safe to enslave became fuzzier, and the Cardien government officially outlawed it in the late 18th century. Slaves may not even be transported through the country. Anyone who escapes from foreign slavery to Cardiel becomes free, with no obligations or debts. This sometimes causes tense relations with the neighboring lands.

Adventuring in Cardiel

Cardiel has little wilderness save the sea, and no large-scale military activities. Explorers and generals find it boring. That said, what it does have is *people*, in a grand diversity of religion, culture, race, and political affiliation. That diversity causes friction, and it is illegal – and often stupid – to resolve that friction through large-scale violence.

This makes Cardiel a country where problems get solved on the personal scale, through stealth in the night and carefully chosen champions by day. Count Faramon of Alimar, for just one example, needs reliable spies to keep him informed of Prince Crivelli's activities. In other words, PCs are in high demand. Cardiel is thus the recommended starting setting for players new to roleplaying or Yrth.

On land, adventures can involve highway brigands, eccentric wizards, and the machinations of politics. However, many adventures will revolve around the sea. Pirates (p. 97) are common, as are smugglers and ruthless merchants. The east coast is also home to sea elf and merfolk tribes, some of whom know of sunken ships full of treasure . . .

The Regions of Cardiel

Cardiel has seven major holdings, including East Tredroy.

Aliar

This port on Cardiel's eastern coast is a short distance from Megalan islands. Thus, it is usually the first stop for Megalan merchant ships bound for Araterre, and is an important trading center. It is famous for the wines produced in the hills south of the city, and for its woolen goods.

The numerous streams and inlets along the coast south of Aliar are havens for pirates who prey on mostly Megalan traders. The pirate problem is bad enough that Count Faramon uses his private fleet to provide cheap escorts to Megalan traders. Faramon has rarely been able to get support for

Count Faramon of Aliar

Faramon, now 60, has lost the last two elections for Prince. As the current Prince is 25 years younger than he is, Faramon is unlikely to see another vote, unless something is done. He thinks so poorly of Crivelli that he has even considered assassination, but would much prefer that the other lords remove Crivelli for misconduct or incompetence. He thus pays constant attention to the Prince's every step, and has set up a spy network.

Faramon was an excellent sailor in his youth, and is today a skilled, knowledgeable, and powerful leader. A Christian, he is and looks part Arab. Normally plain-spoken, the need to spy on his own Prince wears at his conscience.

Baron Saywell of Alimar

At 30, Saywell is the youngest noble on the Council of Lords. He rose to his position when his father, Baron Howarth, choked on a chicken bone five years ago. As his father had been a megalomaniacal, self-important prig, Saywell shed few tears.

Saywell is a moderately competent leader, especially with the help he is getting from the rest of his family. However, he worries he isn't up to the task, and doesn't want the older lords to know this. Crivelli affects to treat him as an equal, and Saywell voted for him for Prince as a show of solidarity. Crivelli regards Saywell as very easy to manipulate, which is why he arranged for that "chicken bone" in the first place.

his anti-pirate crusade, since they usually prey on Megalans. The current Prince is especially unhelpful, since trouble in Aliar means more trade for Hadaton.

Alimar

The city of Alimar was the second Cardien city to receive a charter. It lies on a sheltered bay in southeast Cardiel, in the land's only real mountains. The major exports from the region are grapes, oranges, sugar cane, and the products of the many milkfish farms.

The peninsula and small islands southeast of Alimar are home to Cardiel's main elven population. They have a half-dozen small communities here. Although technically vassals of the Prince, they keep to themselves, and the humans mostly leave them alone. Occasionally a young elf emigrates to the city to sample human life. As a result, Alimar is one of the few places in Ytarria where half-elves are common. In fact, Baron Arannior of Tabir, a rural fiefdom southwest of the city, is half-elven.

Before the opening of Araterre, Alimar was a small port. Its remoteness from foreign coasts made it little more than a fishing village. Now Alimar is a rival to the port of Aliar, whose people deeply resent the loss of trade.

Calder

Small by Megalan standards, but huge as inland Cardien cities go, Calder Town is prosperous. Located in the heart of the northwestern plains, it is somewhat overshadowed by Tredroy. The main regional industry is cattle ranching, and Calder is where local lords go to sell cattle and trade for supplies and luxury items.

Much of Calder's prosperity can be traced to Baron Vincent's tenure as Prince. During the 1980s, he used tax revenues to improve the roads leading to Calder, and subsidized trading ventures. Having enriched both himself and his subjects, Vincent cheerfully retired as Prince, and began a career as a power broker. He made a few enemies during his reign, however, and Calder still seethes with politics.

Hadaton

Hadaton is the home city of Prince Crivelli, and thus the capital of Cardiel. It is also the most Megalan, and most Christian, of all the fiefdoms in Cardiel. Megalos conquered this region first, and held it the longest. At the mouth of the River Blueshoal, with rocky coasts to the north and south, it is the largest seaport for several hundred miles. It is also the gate through which goods from Tredroy travel to reach the ocean, and Hadaton makes money off of every ship that passes through. The surrounding land is green and fertile, though slightly colder than most of Cardiel.

Despite the efforts of many Cardien lords, Hadaton is a bastion of conservatism and, relatively speaking, religious intolerance. Muslims, while they are certainly free to worship and not physically harassed, have the Social Stigma (Second-Class Citizen) disadvantage here. Pagans suffer similar indignities, and must be careful not to arouse the superstitious fears of their neighbors.

The Duchy has been held by the powerful Crivelli family for over a hundred years. Now that Prince Anthemius Crivelli is attending to Cardiel as a whole, local governance is the responsibility of Count Furius Crivelli, the governor of Hadaton City and the Prince's cousin. While Furius is loyal to Anthemius and just as devious, he is not nearly as intelligent, and Anthemius' enemies suspect Furius might be a weak spot in the Crivelli power structure.

Minder

The major fiefdom on Cardiel's southern coast is the Barony of Minder. It has rich farmland, and produces many cash crops as well as plenty of food for the local populace. Orchards of citrus and olive trees lie between fields of cane and wheat. The land is also good for cattle, and Minder leather goods fetch high prices as far as Caithness. The city of Minder boasts Cardiel's largest shipyard; one of the country's few forests, known as Shipwright's Wood, is nearby.

In recent years, a formerly-nomadic band of centaurs have settled on a site northeast of Minder. They pay rent on the land by selling their handicrafts, working as cattle-hands, and helping with the orange harvest. The band includes a *brilliant* smith: a centaur sage in an unusual profession. Though gruff, he is willing to accept commissions from humans, and has even begun teaching a weekly class on metallurgy; he appears to have read every Ytarrian book on the subject, and has firmly late TL4 skills. How he learned his trade is unknown.

Ten-Tiri

Ten-Tiri is a small seaport at the southwest corner of Cardiel. Located at the mouth of the Wadi al Fayd, the port serves much of southern al-Haz and Cardiel. The land around Ten-Tiri is dry and hot. Wheat and cotton are major crops; sheep and goats are the most common livestock. Small fishing villages line the beaches near the city.

The fiefdom is large and underpopulated by Cardien standards, and somewhat isolated. On the opposite end of Cardiel from Hadaton, Ten-Tiri is also politically and theologically distant from the capital. Most citizens are Muslim, and the culture is tolerant and friendly to the point of boisterousness.

Ten-Tiri has had repeated problems with Shi'ite agitators from al-Haz. Fanatic mullahs cross the river and preach that the Muslims of the city must cast out the Christians in their midst. This offends both the Christians and the tolerant, mostly Sunni Muslims of the city. Baron Amalric hasn't found a way to dissuade the Shi'ites, and simply deports them whenever they cause trouble. However, he is under considerable pressure from the Christian community to make an example of one of them. This is politically impossible; they're Hazi citizens as well as Muslim holy men, regardless of how obnoxious and misguided they are. He is eagerly looking for a better solution.

Baron Vincent of Calder

Vincent was Prince of Calder from 1976 to 1990, when he stepped down voluntarily. Though he's short, overweight, and balding, no one makes the mistake of underestimating him. He was an effective prince, and remains a clever baron. The citizens of Calder adore him, giving him influence on the Commoners' Council. In his mid-60s, he is an intelligent administrator with a startling facility for facts and numbers.

Vincent chose his successor, Allan Micardene, and did most of the politicking that got Micardene elected. Vincent believes he repeated the process with Crivelli, but now that Crivelli no longer wants his advice, he is starting to wonder who picked who. He's worried he may have to find a way to become Prince again, for the sake of Cardiel.

Baron Amalric ibn-John at-Ten-Tiri

Amalric, age 57, is Cardiel's most important Muslim baron. Separated from the rest of the Council of Lords geographically and by faith, he spends most of his time dealing with his subjects' welfare, and little on the political wrangling which preoccupies other nobles. His devotion to his people has earned him their intense loyalty. His only political tie is a minor one to Viscount Guillaume, who got his vote in the last election by promising a favorable trade agreement. Amalric correctly suspects that Guillaume looks down on him, but trade is trade, and Guillaume is hundreds of miles away.

Tredroy: The City of Three Laws

Tredroy sprawls across two rivers and into three separate countries. It is the second-largest city in Ytarria after Megalos, with a population of 200,000. A thriving port, as the River Blueshoal is navigable for almost its entire length, it serves large portions of southern al-Wazif, northeastern al-Haz, and northwestern Cardiel. It is a place of sophistication, diplomacy, trade . . . and of knives in alleys, dockside brawls, and wizards' duels. Its name comes from the phrase "tres droits," or "three laws."

History

Christian fishermen founded the village of Paradin at the fork of the rivers Lorian and Blueshoal in 1180. Christians were scarce in the area then, and they felt the need to band together in a reasonably defensible location. Within a few decades, Paradin was home to several hundred people, and had grown into a trading center. The town quickly became religiously diverse, notably when a local Christian merchant named Victor le Perdu began hiring Muslim tribesmen as caravan guards. In 1347, another merchant, Isaak bar Hanan, founded the Paradin Company of Adventurers, which has in one form or another influenced economics in the city up to the present day.

The town was besieged, conquered, and sacked repeatedly over the next

two centuries – by the First Crusade (1365), Pasha Ali ibn-Hayyam (1381), Prince Ivor Romulus (1425), Pasha Javad (1443), General Lord Regis Marin (1458), Pasha Javad again (1460), the Grand Crusade (1470), and a joint Hazi-Wazifi force (1523). The nickname "Tredroy" arose shortly after al-Kard became Cardiel (in 1470), as recognition of the city's unique situation astride three nations, and became official in 1496.

Shortly thereafter, the Mages' Guild and the assorted governments of Tredroy decided to formalize the way the city was run, to minimize further trade-disrupting friction. In 1524, the wizards created Council Island, and the City Council moved onto it and became an effective ruling body. In 1589, representatives of the Caliph of al-Wazif, the Sultan of al-Haz, and the Viceroy of Cardiel granted Tredroy its charter.

Tredroy survived the Hazi jihad of 1775 unscathed, and rode out the Megalan counter-invasion, and the coming of Cardien independence, equally smoothly. The past two centuries have seen prosperity and growth. There have also been a few shifts in the city government, as the Council gradually expanded and acquired centralized control over taxes.

Baron Caius of Minder

At 79, Caius is a very old and proper Cardien aristocrat. He is still fiercely healthy, and has been called "The Oaken Baron" by his subjects and peers. He is old enough to remember the Hazi border squabble of 1935 (his father fought in it), and has made a study of military strategy. He'd make an excellent wartime general. Though reasonably honest himself, he is cynical about politics. He thus finds the Prince's scheming annoying, not outright infuriating. Still, he would cheerfully support long-time ally Count Faramon in any reasonably legitimate attempt to remove Crivelli.

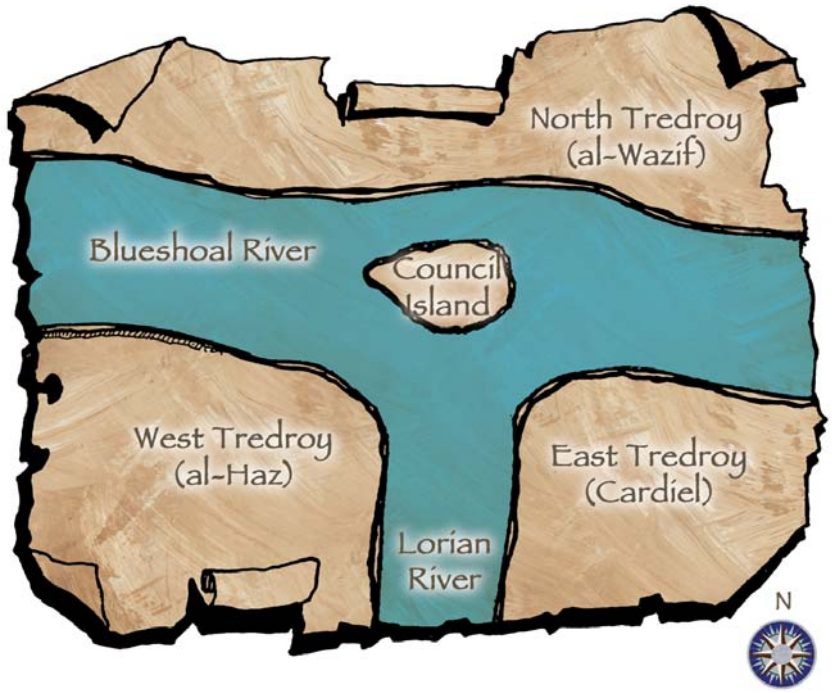
Layout and Architecture

At Tredroy, the River Lorian flows north into the east-west River Blueshoal. Wazifi North Tredroy lies north of the Blueshoal, Hazi West Tredroy is west of the Lorain, and Cardien East Tredroy is east of the Lorian. The "neutral" Council Island lies in the middle of the fork. A half-dozen bridges connect the three parts of the city; none go to Council Island, but there is a regular ferry service. The island, in addition to Council Hall, has numerous offices for government officials, a small inn, and assorted cafes.

North and West Tredroy are, respectively, the largest cities in al-Wazif and al-Haz. (East Tredroy is third in Cardiel after Hadaton and Aliar.) North Tredroy contains the oldest, wealthiest, poorest, and busiest sections of Tredroy, including the cosmopolitan business district, the academic Alati District, the Jewish Quarter, and the shady section known as Dockside. Architecture in North Tredroy is mostly Islamic, with an admixture of robust European-style construction.

West Tredroy is somewhat smaller and quieter. It is also visibly more Muslim, both in architecture and culture. Most of the buildings are newer, and the South End of West Tredroy still has farms.

East Tredroy has a distinct Imperial feel, with many monuments and buildings dating from when Cardiel was part of Megalos. It includes Tredroy's Chinatown. Part of East Tredroy is the fiefdom of Lurnan, Viscount Guillaume's ancestral holding.



Government

Tredroy has three governors and the City Council. Their respective rights and powers are laid out in the Charter of the City of Tredroy, which dates to 1589. It is very complicated document but, in brief, the governors are responsible for criminal law, the maintenance of public order, and the defense of their respective territories. The council is responsible for local services and taxation.

The Governor of East Tredroy is appointed by the Prince of Cardiel. The post was previously held by Allan Micardene, who was also Prince from 1990 to 2004. The current governor is Viscount Guillaume de Laney de Lurnan. He is a member of one of the oldest noble bloodlines in Cardiel, and despised Micardene as an upstart merchant. Micardene becoming

prince was a mixed blessing to Guillaume. The idea of someone going from tradesman to Prince in one lifetime was infuriating, but it meant East Tredroy became the capital, to Guillaume's economic benefit. It also meant Micardene spent much of his time attending to Cardiel as a whole, letting Guillaume extend his influence within the city.

The idea of someone going from tradesman to Prince in one lifetime was infuriating . . .

Prince Micardene died, apparently of old age, in 2004. Guillaume stepped in as pro tem Governor of East Tredroy, and offered himself as a candidate for prince. Before the election, Crivelli approached him, and suggested that Micardene's death might not have been natural, and that, if Crivelli was elected, he would be happy to confirm Guillaume in his role as governor. Guillaume, however, decided to try to become prince anyway, and lost. Crivelli confirmed Guillaume as governor regardless, and Guillaume is now very uncertain of his relation with his new prince. Do they have an understanding, despite Guillaume's lack of support, or will there be another "natural" death?

In the meantime, Guillaume (now 51) governs East Tredroy as best he can . . . but he's not a very good administrator. He receives ample support from his much smarter ally, Baron Adrien Dorilis.

The Governor of North Tredroy is appointed for life by the Caliph of al-Wazif, and is called the Emir. The current Emir is Jannar abu Talha al-Paradin, a powerful and ancient mage. He is over 130 years old, though seemingly in his seventies. He is the most influential man in Tredroy, with a web of agents throughout the city. He knows he doesn't have much time left, and is trying to find someone suitable to be his successor; the Caliph will almost certainly accept his recommendation.

The Pasha of Three Horsetails, Khalid Abdallah ibn-Ali al-Paradin, is the hereditary Governor of West Tredroy. The Pasha, aged 42, is a very strict and devout Muslim, and a competent leader. The intricacies of politics and intrigue are slightly beyond him, however, and much goes on behind his back.

The Council has 30 members. The guilds appoint 13, the three governors appoint one each, and religious leaders appoint another four. Appointees all serve one-year terms. The other 10 Council members are elected by the people, and serve three-year terms. The Council chooses a Mayor from among those 10; his duties are mainly ceremonial and procedural.

Laws in Tredroy vary, being strictest in West Tredroy, and most relaxed in East Tredroy. That said, the three parts of the city cooperate fully on matters of taxation, guilds, and law enforcement.

In West Tredroy, all non-Muslims must wear a white armband or headband at all times. A light flogging is the typical punishment for not doing so. Deliberately posing as a Muslim is much more severely punished.

North Tredroy is more relaxed, though disrespect to Muslim religious leaders or nobility is taken very seriously. Its courts are, startlingly, nearly secular. North Tredroy also has a unique tariff on goods entering that section of the city, of 10% of the value over one talent ($1,000). The bridge guards are good at their job, but they're not immune to bribes.

East Tredroy's laws are based on Cardiel secular law, and are reasonably fair. The courts are even-handed, and many contracts are registered in East Tredroy for preference. Tredroy also has a Christian canonical court. Its primary jurisdiction is over clerics of the Church, but it can try citizens for grievous blasphemy, heresy, and the practice of evil magic.

Unlike North and West Tredroy, the Cardien East has no slavery. The Slavers' Guild has no standing there, and a slave who gets across the river can claim freedom – although there is then significant danger of being recaptured and returned illegally. This is the largest single source of friction between the three parts of the city. An

Baron Adrien Dorilis

Dorilis is Guillaume's lifelong ally and confidant. He is also a dragon in disguise. The real Adrien died in childhood; the dragon Dexnavi had been watching for such an opportunity, and, in shapeshifted form, managed to step into the role. He has been the Baron Dorilis for over 50 years now – an insignificant fraction of his 1,200 years – and hasn't shifted back to dragon form for a decade.

Dexnavi has an aggressive interest in human politics. This is mostly a hobby, but he believes it may become important if humans continue to breed and expand into dragon territories. His current very long-term project is to make Tredroy into its own separate country. He expects this to take at least another 20 years, and perhaps a full century.

Most of his current schemes revolve around improving Guillaume's position and skills, and distancing him from the rest of the Cardien Council. Guillaume completely trusts him, not suspecting his friend's nature, or even that he's being manipulated. Dexnavi may also be responsible for the way elves in Tredroy occasionally turn up dead; he played a nasty role in their pre-Banestorm history, appears by name in their legends, and worries they might see through his disguise.

Dorilis appears to be a red-haired, green-eyed man in his early 60s. People have begun calling him "well-preserved," so he has started to add some gray to his hair. In a decade or two he will have to change roles, and he's thinking about hiring someone to play his long-lost son. Then Adrien can die, the actor can be shuffled off to Araterre, and Dexnavi can take his place.

Dexnavi is very intelligent, and occasionally becomes frustrated when others won't take his advice. He is not, however, omnipotent, and has learned to respect both Crivelli and Vincent as politicians; they are as yet unaware of his machinations. He is an expert wizard; intensive study of the Body Control college has enabled him to internalize its power, giving him the Morph advantage.

Dexnavi (795 points)

Age 1,200; 42'; 3,100 lbs.; dragon; green scales and eyes. (His statistics as Dorilis appear below.)
ST 32 [0]; **DX** 14 [0]; **IQ** 17 [20]; **HT** 15 [0].
Damage 3d+1/6d-1; BL 205 lbs.; HP 32 [0]; Will 17 [0]; Per 19 [0]; FP 35 [0].
Basic Speed 7.25 [0]; Basic Move 7 [0]; Dodge 10.

Social Background

TL: 3.
CF: Christian region [0]; Muslim region [1].
Languages: Draconic (Native) [0]; Anglish (Native) [6]; Aralaise (Accented; Free from Anglish) [0]; Arabic (Native) [6]; Ladino (Native) [6]; Latin (Accented) [4]; Tredroy Patois (Accented) [4].

Advantages

Charisma 2 [10]; Discriminatory Smell [15]; Fearlessness 2 [4]; High Pain Threshold [10]; Intuition [15]; Monstrous Dragon (p. 228) [444]; Morph [100]; Night Vision 4 [4]; Perfect Balance [15]; Single-Minded [5]; Terror [30]; Wealth (Very Wealthy) [30].

Disadvantages

Callous (Toward non-dragons only, -10%) [-4]; Enemies (Elves; 6 or less) [-15]; Hidebound [-5]; Miserliness (12) [-10]; Obsession (Make Tredroy its own country) (15) [-5].
Quirks: Chauvinistic; Mildly gluttonous; Proud. [-3]

Skills

Acting-17 (IQ+0) [2]; Administration-16 (IQ-1) [1]; Aerobatics-13 (DX-1) [2]; Area Knowledge (Tredroy)-18 (IQ+1) [2]; Area Knowledge (Ytarria)-17 (IQ+0) [1]; Body Language-18 (Per-1) [1]; Connoisseur (Cuisine)-16 (IQ-1) [1]; Current Affairs/TL3 (Tredroy)-18 (IQ+1) [2]; Current Affairs/TL3 (Ytarria)-17 (IQ+0) [1]; Detect Lies-17 (Per-2) [1]; Diplomacy-16 (IQ-1) [2]; Disguise/TL3-16 (IQ-1) [1]; Dropping-13 (DX-1) [1]; Economics-15 (IQ-2) [1]; Flight-16 (HT+1) [4]; Forgery/TL3-15 (IQ-2) [1]; Gesture-17 (IQ+0) [1]; Heraldry-16 (IQ-1) [1]; Hidden Lore (Dragons)-16 (IQ-1) [1]; History (20th-Century Ytarrian)-15 (IQ-2) [1]; History (Cardien)-15 (IQ-2) [1]; Innate Attack (Breath)-14 (DX+0) [1]; Interrogation-16 (IQ-1) [1]; Intimidation-16 (Will-1) [1]; Law (East

Continued on next page . . .

Baron Adrien Dorilis (Continued)

Tredroy)-15 (IQ-2) [1]; Naturalist-15 (IQ-2) [1]; Physiology/TL3 (Dragon)-16 (IQ-1) [2]; Physiology/TL3 (Human)-16 (IQ-1) [2]; Politics-18 (IQ+1) [4]; Propaganda/TL3-16 (IQ-1) [1]; Research/TL3-16 (IQ-1) [1]; Savoir-Faire-17 (IQ+0) [1]; Sociology-17 (IQ+0) [4]; Speed-Reading-16 (IQ-1) [1]; Survival (Mountain)-18 (Per-1) [1]; Thaumatology-18 (IQ+1) [2]*.

Spells

Alter Body-18 [1]*; Alter Visage-18 [1]*; Analyze Magic-18 [1]*; Apportation-18 [1]*; Aura-18 [1]*; Burning Death-17 [1]*; Clumsiness-18 [1]*; Cold-18 [1]*; Counterspell-18 [1]*; Create Fire-18 [1]*; Death Vision-18 [1]*; Deathouch-18 [1]*; Detect Magic-18 [1]*; Dispel Magic-18 [1]*; Drunkenness-18 [1]*; Essential Flame-18 [1]*; Extinguish Fire-18 [1]*; Fast Fire-18 [1]*; Fireproof-18 [1]*; Foolishness-18 [1]*; Heat-18 [1]*; Hinder-18 [1]*; Identify Spell-18 [1]*; Ignite Fire-18 [1]*; Itch-18 [1]*; Lend Energy-18 [1]*; Magelock-18 [1]*; Mind-Reading-18 [1]*; Pain-18 [1]*; Paralyze Limb-18 [1]*; Permanent Shapeshifting (Gorilla)-17 [1]*; Phantom Flame-18 [1]*; Rain Of Fire-18 [1]*; Recover Energy-18 [1]*; Resist Cold-18 [1]*; Resist Fire-18 [1]*; Seek Earth-18 [1]*; Seek Fire-18 [1]*; Seek Water-18 [1]*; Seeker-18 [1]*; Sense Emotion-18 [1]*; Sense Foes-18 [1]*; Shape Fire-18 [1]*; Shapeshifting (Gorilla)-17 [1]*; Shapeshifting (Horse)-17 [1]*; Shapeshifting (Python)-17 [1]*; Sickness-18 [1]*; Slow Fire-18 [1]*; Smoke-18 [1]*; Spasm-18 [1]*; Trace-18 [1]*; Transform Body-18 [1]*; Truthsayer-18 [1]*; Warmth-18 [1]*; Wither Limb-18 [1]*.

* +3 from Magery.

Dexnavi's Enhanced Human Template (468 points)

When Dexnavi shapeshifts into human form, he retains many of his draconic traits. In game terms, his "human" racial template is substantially more powerful than the norm.

Attribute Modifiers: ST+12 [120]; DX+2 [40]; IQ+6 [120]; HT+5 [50].

Secondary Characteristic Modifiers: Per+2 [10]; FP +20 [60].

Advantages: Magery 3 [35]; Metabolism Control 9 [45]; and Unaging [15].

Disadvantages: Dependency (Mana, Very Common, Constantly) [-25]; and Loner (15) [-2].

Baron Adrien Dorilis (804 points)

Age 63; 5'8"; 140 lbs.; Caucasian human; red hair, green eyes.

ST 22 [0]; **DX** 12 [0]; **IQ** 17 [20]; **HT** 15 [0].
Damage 2d/4d; BL 97 lbs.; HP 22 [0]; Will 17 [0]; Per 19 [0]; FP 35 [0].
Basic Speed 6.75 [0]; Basic Move 6 [0]; Dodge 9.

Social Background

Same as for Dexnavi.

Advantages

Same as for Dexnavi, except substituting Dexnavi's Enhanced Human Template [468] for Monstrous Dragon [564], and adding Status 3 [15].

Disadvantages

Same as for Dexnavi (including Quirks), except adding Secret (Manipulative dragon; possible death) [-30].

Skills

Same as for Dexnavi, except for his three DX-based skills, which go down by 2, to Aerobatics-11 [2]; Dropping-11 [1]; and Innate Attack (Breath)-12 [1]. (Of course, he can't use those skills in human form anyway!)

Spells

Same as for Dexnavi.

active liberation movement exploits the situation, sometimes causing enough trouble to make itself unpopular in East Tredroy, despite its romantic image.

The Guilds

Tredroy is very firmly in its guilds' pockets. They control the city's business affairs, with little supervision. Guildmasters determine 13 Council seats, and can easily get the support of at least five other members on any important issue. The guilds protect their monopolies fiercely, and cover all aspects of the city's economic life.

The two most important guilds are the Company of Merchants and the Mercenaries' Guild. Both are huge; there are 800 full merchants, 1,000 associate merchants, and thousands of mercenaries. Both organizations were created when the Company of Adventurers split in two in 1426. They are still intertwined; the simplest expression of their relationship is that the Mercenaries protect the city, and the Merchants pay them to do it.

The Mercenaries' Guild is broadly similar to the Armsmen's Guild described on p. 51, though more limited in geographic scope. Not all members are strictly "armsmen"; many are what are called "practicals," people who can get things done and find things out. These spies and rogues fit into the Mercenaries' Guild largely because they don't belong anywhere else, and they *do* tend to be good with knives.

Tredroy's Mages' Guild is more coherent and structured than in most

cities, as the government prefers there to be a guild monopoly. Everyone in the city who uses spells, nobles included, must register with the Guild, but only those who use magic professionally must join. It has a few hundred members; young apprentices spend most of their time helping their masters enchant objects for sale. Once they reach journeyman, they are free to switch masters in order to learn a wider range of spells.

Tredroy is also home to two illegal guilds: a fairly standard Thieves' Guild (p. 51), and an Assassins' Guild. The leaders of the former claim that their organization was also part of the Company of Adventurers, and, although they spend most of their time stealing from their fellow citizens, they are quite patriotic. Whenever the city has been invaded, the Thieves' Guild has formed the core of the resistance and has always managed to make a profit in the process.

The Assassins currently have their headquarters in Tredroy, and operate throughout the region. The Guild is not religious in nature, though it originated as a fanatical anti-Megalan organization in Calder around 1500; as such, it should not be confused with the Hashishin (p. 72). *Some* of its members are death cultists, or have strong political leanings, but the organization generally works for whoever pays. It has about 100 members, and uses small teams for most contracts. The Assassins are very careful, and the masters are very skilled. Contacting them requires a Streetwise roll at -2, and a good explanation of your needs.

People of Tredroy

Tredroy is the most culturally diverse city in Ytarria. In terms of religion, 45% are Christian, 25% are Muslim, 15% are Jewish (Tredroy is the center of Judaism in Ytarria), and the remainder are a mix of Hindus, pagans, agnostics, and Chinese who practice a blend of Taoism, Confucianism, Buddhism, and folk tradition.

By race, Tredroy is 90% human, with the rest being goblins, halflings, kobolds, a small reptile man community, and a few orcs. Dwarf traders sometimes visit, but find the inevitable human curiosity annoying. Elves are practically unknown, and usually wear disguises if they do enter the city. When asked about this, they reply that Tredroy isn't safe for them. This is true; undisguised elven visitors sometimes end up floating in the river.

Places of Interest

Council Hall is a rambling three-story structure, and houses the office of the Mayor, the Councilors and their staffs, and several of the larger city offices – over 800 people. It is a very busy place during the day. The nearby park is ringed by food vendors.

The largest market of the region is the Grand Bazaar, in North Tredroy. It is a huge open area, covering nearly 100 acres, usually filled with carts, stalls, and tents. Anything available for sale in Tredroy is available here, and thanks to fierce competition, good hagglers can get a fair price or better. The Bazaar is also a venue for minstrels, preachers, and pickpockets.

The Mages' Guildhall is a large, comfortable manor in North Tredroy. It is divided into a guest house and a main hall; the latter's doors are sealed with Magelock spells (at 16), preventing non-mages from entering. There are numerous other defenses as well, magical and not. The guest house sees a steady stream of visitors commissioning magic items and paying for spells.

The Grand Mosque is located in West Tredroy. It can hold over 4,000

Adventuring in Tredroy

Tredroy is Ytarria's big adventuring city. Though half the size of the city of Megalos, it is far more vibrant and cosmopolitan, and a multiracial, multi-religion party of adventurers could easily all be native Tredroyans. And they wouldn't have to go far to have adventures; opportunities include bounty hunting for criminals, spying for and on any of the governors or councilors, smuggling, enforcing guild rules, evading the Thieves' Guild, running escaped slaves to freedom, and ferreting out the city's innumerable secrets.

people, but worshippers still spill outside on holy days. It incorporates the offices of the Chief Mullah of Tredroy, an excellent school, and the High Shari'a Court.

The Cathedral of the Holy Trinity, in East Tredroy, is the second largest cathedral in the world, after St. Peter's in Megalos. The vaulted roof is over 100' high, supported by iron pillars. The offices of the Christian Archdiocese of Tredroy are here, and the local headquarters of the Templars. There is also a wealth of art, which regrettably is rarely displayed.

The Street of Artificers is in East Tredroy's Chinatown, though only 25% of the artificers are actually Chinese. They are mostly clockmakers and toymakers, although some create larger devices. Their gadgets are typically powered by springs, water, or animals. There are also numerous curio shops on this street, and it has a largely undeserved reputation for being the best place in Ytarria to look for Earth artifacts.

Sahud

The land of Sahud lies at the northwest edge of Ytarria. Traders and travelers from the northern countries sometimes journey there, but to the people of the south it is mysterious or unknown.

Geography

Sahud proper is a peninsula some 600 by 120 miles in area. The Sahudese also control a strip of coast 750 miles long, east of the peninsula and north of the Bronze Mountains. Sahudese territory is bounded on the south by Zarak, on the west by the edge of the Orclands, and elsewhere by the waters of the Koriryu No Umi. Under centuries-old treaties, Sahud technically overlaps Zarak slightly; a few thousand Sahudese live in the mountains. Though nearly as far north as the Nomad Lands, Sahud is much more temperate, thanks to a warm ocean current that runs east out of the Hesperian Ocean, before turning north along Sahud's west coast.

Most parts of Sahud are under cultivation, though the destruction of a clan may mean its territory will lie vacant for years. Crops include not only grains and tea but also tomatoes, yams, and sugar maple, arrived through the Banestorm from Earth's Americas. Wilder areas quickly go to brambles, and are sometimes infested with a nasty form of carnivorous plant. Forests are rare and composed mostly of pine, cedar, and redwoods. Fox, deer, hares, cranes, eagles, treetippers, and an occasional nightstalker inhabit the few wild regions. Sea-birds are common; the Sahudese consider some kinds a great delicacy.

Cultivated areas are made up of neat miniature farms. Domestic animals include cats, dogs, hardings, woolens, and cattle. Horses are only owned and ridden by the nobility. Falconry is quite popular; Megalan devotees of the sport prize Sahudese falcons highly. Silk is Sahud's greatest export, and most southern farms cultivate silkworms.

History

The humans transplanted to Sahud were primarily from Japan, Korea, China, Mongolia, Siberia, Southeast Asia, and pre-Columbus North America. They quickly settled down to peaceful lives of farming or nomadic wandering. For centuries there was little government; the few nobles brought in by the Banestorm had lost their support structure, and either died when they tried to give orders to Mongols, or learned to plow. Contact with other races was mostly amiable, and some halfling and goblin families settled in Sahud. A few orc raids were less pleasant, but the Sahudese managed to fight them off. The Zarakun mostly ignored the humans to their north, as long as they didn't venture too far into their mountains.

As the population grew, the nomads either settled down, or departed Sahud to the southwest. Different families of farmers began to have disputes over land. Lacking military expertise, they developed new ways of settling arguments, most notably, the carefully regulated idea of high war (p. 152). The families who won these contests gained in prestige, eventually evolving into a new nobility. The members of this upper class modeled themselves on old tales of Earth nobility, and created their own customs.

By 1500, Sahud had a complex social hierarchy. It had also seen the return of true war. An exceptionally aggressive clan had attempted to conquer all of Sahud, using Sahud's first army. The other clans united and destroyed them as a threat to the social order. This codified the role of "low war" (p. 152) as something used only by or against the socially unacceptable.

It also established that there was a power vacuum at the top of the hierarchy. Many clan leaders met under various pretexts, and eventually came to an agreement. One leader, arguably a fraction higher in status, declared

Who is "Sahudese"?

Over 80% of the people who live in Sahud are humans of mixed Asian ancestry. However, there are Sahudese who are human but not Asian, mostly people descended from American Indians brought there by the Banestorm and immigrants from the Nomad Lands. There are also non-human Sahudese (see p. 151). The culture is largely race-blind; anyone who acts Sahudese *is* Sahudese.

It's also worth noting that not everyone in Ytarria who is genetically Asian is Sahudese. There is a minor population of Chinese in Tredroy, and similar small communities across the rest of the continent. They are quite used to being mistaken for Sahudese, but are almost as baffled by that odd society as everyone else.

himself the Heavenking, manifest ruler of Sahud. The other leaders deferred to his "obvious" fitness to rule, and provided funds and laborers for the construction of Uulinn, the new capital, on a hill near Kinkaku. The Heavenking's chief advisors were members of the other clans, and his conduit to the outside world. The "lesser" clans thus gave up very little real power.

Sahud has quietly endured minor raids from the Nomad Lands, but prior to 1575 there had been no real contact with the other humans of Ytarria. In that year, an exploring ship out of Megalos landed on the coast east of Kinkaku. Communication was difficult, but there was no bloodshed, and the explorers returned to Megalos, reporting, "Very strange people, probably human, some trade possibilities." The Emperor considered trying to conquer Sahud, but dealing with the Nomad Lands obviously came first – and they were proving a challenge. There were occasional trade missions over the following centuries, and by 1800 many Megalan merchants made the trip regularly.

The Sahudese, in contrast, showed little interest in the outside world. They had no desire to conquer, and their ships were inferior to those of Megalos. The most important thing in Sahud was stability. Clans have risen and fallen, but there has been no change in overall Sahudese life for many centuries.

Current Foreign Relations

The Court of Heaven is reasonably informed about the state of the rest of Ytarria, including national and some regional politics. Megalos and Zarak are major trading partners. Sahud's relationship with Zarak is venerable and bound by tradition. It has no true diplomatic relationship with Megalos, however. Diplomats on both sides have spent decades trying to arrange affairs between the two Byzantine governments. At the moment, most interaction is between Sahudese clans and Megalan merchants.

Sahud has some trade with Caithness, but it is primarily handled by Zarakun; a mere handful of Sahudese and Caithnesser traders have permission from the dwarves to pass through Zarak, and there is an even smaller number of smugglers. The Court of Heaven would like to speak to some shipwrights from Araterre about naval technology, but the distance and culture gap has proven impossible to bridge thus far. The consensus of the Court is that al-Haz, al-Wazif, and Cardiel are currently irrelevant to Sahud.

Names in Sahud

Sahudese names are Japanese in character, having several syllables and many vowels. Common folk have just one name. Nobles have longer personal names and a clan name. Their names often have a poetic meaning (e.g., "Freedom of a Thousand Birds"), and Anglish-speaking Sahudese may introduce themselves using the translation.

Common Sahudese names are: Akiro, Ashiriwa, Bunoketa, Futsukiman, Hiyoshiwara, Kaoshuang, Kyushuonai, Matsuko, Nishiji, Ochiriwa, Okishaido, Shizuoka, Soshogazawa, Tanega, Tsukiyama, Yachikura, and Yoshigawa.

In general, Sahudese names are composed of alternating single consonants and vowels. Names usually have three, four or even five syllables, and end in a vowel or the letter n. The few consonant combinations and diphthongs which are common are ch, sh, ts, ky, ng, ao, ai, and uo.

Society

Sahudese society has many rules, most of which can vary by location and the time of day or year. Visitors will no doubt find them bewildering, but may learn a few of the basics. The rules are strictest among the highest classes; non-Sahudese will find peasants relatively easy to interact with, if still sometimes baffling.

It is possible for an intelligent foreigner to eventually understand the patterns of Sahudese society. However, it is hard to find a teacher in the first place. In Sahud, people are taught the rules while they are children, and making mistakes as an adult can cause loss of face. Thus, teaching the rules to an adult visitor is the same as treating him as a child. Worse, acknowledging that the visitor doesn't know the rules is a rude attack on the visitor's face. The polite behavior is to pretend not to notice. A Sahudese willing to sit down and explain things to visitors is either exceptionally pragmatic, a social outcast, or actively interested in ruining the visitor's prestige and thus probably lying.

Status

Class and status are as important as in Megalos, but much more complex. Understanding how to behave with someone of different status is difficult enough, but simply determining a person's relative status in the first place is highly involved.

To begin, status is normally based on breeding. Children are of the same social class as their parents, assuming they were married. Married couples are always the same status – if they weren't when they got engaged, they usually both end up at the lower level. At Status 4 and above, Sahudese can have trouble finding a spouse of their own class; under these circumstances, the Court of Heaven may elevate someone appropriate.

If the mother is not married to the father, the child has the mother's status. However, if the father is of higher status, he might adopt the child, raising its status without admitting paternity.

Children of peasants and professionals (such as merchants) usually take up their parents' occupation, and thus keep their birth status for life. Members of noble clan families, however, may rise in rank as they become more senior in the family . . . or fall as their clan loses power. Similarly, government officials can rise in rank, with a corresponding increase in status.

These factors merely establish a person's "base" Status. The relative status between two people can vary. In their shops, skilled craftsmen are effectively two levels higher . . . but if they step outside, their Status returns to normal. Peasants have no shops, but their Status rises one level during two weeks of the harvest season. Similar variations apply to most occupations. In addition, the behavior of a Sahudese's clan affects Status. For example, any member of a clan involved in a low war loses one level for the duration of the war, even if it is against non-Sahudese.

The second major factor in an individual's standing is *face,* in the sense of prestige. In Sahud, one gains face by conforming to societal norms, and loses it through deviant behavior. Face is not an internal measure of self-worth, but is measured by how others treat you. It can be represented in ***GURPS*** by Reputation, though most day-to-day fluctuations are too minor to note. Most face is personal, but families, clans, and other social units also have face, represented in game terms by a Reputation, or even Social Regard or Social Stigma if the group has long been seen in this way by everyone.

These rules are occasionally bent into very odd shapes. There are Sahudese who break enormous numbers of rules, but are clearly beneficial to society. The most obvious examples are capable female samurai. Since their actions are useful, no one wants to make them lose face by pointing out how outrageous they are being. These "acceptable deviants" are their own category, made possible by a mass act of denial. People can't get into this category through minor

Sahudese Status

Level	*Examples*
7	Heavenking
6	Eyes of Heaven
5	Imperial nobles, high ministers
4	Major clan heads, high priests, powerful wizards
3	Minor clan heads, minor high priests
2	Samurai, abbots, typical wizards
1	Wealthy farmers, ronin, monks, craftsmen, merchants
0	Artisans, peasants, minor wizards, ninja
-1	Servants, geisha, courtesans, wanderers
-2	Outcasts, beggars, thieves

violations, only by recklessly rebelling in a manner that benefits others. Extremely *dangerous* people sometimes get treated the same way, even if they are threatening to society.

Social Interaction

Once two Sahudese have determined who is more important, and by how much, the next question is how they should treat each other. One of the fundamental principles is that mutual politeness is only possible between equals. Someone of lower class is normally obliged to be polite to his betters, while a high-class individual is free to be rude to inferiors. The flip side of this, however, is that it is considered gracious for people of high status to be kind to those under them, so long as it is done without expectation of return. After all, that would mean the higher person needed to wheedle politeness out of inferiors. It also must be done without any *actual* return, so a lower-class person is sometimes socially obliged to *not* return politeness from a superior, and must make a token display of rudeness. People of equal social status usually treat each other with equal civility.

When two Sahudese interact, they typically both try to preserve the other's face. For example, if a Sahudese is looking to buy fruit, and notices that the farmer's produce is all undersized, the first thing he says may be, "With the terrible weather lately, I am sure you have no fruit for purchase, and I will have to go hungry." Even if the fruit is in plain sight, and the weather has been fine, the farmer thus saves face by having heroically been able to produce fruit. Non-Sahudese naturally wonder if the shopper is blind or insane.

While most social interaction is thus "win-win," there is also a great deal of competition and maneuvering, particularly between nobles. Making someone lose face involves calling attention to their flaws and missteps. Doing this directly ("Your robes are threadbare and tawdry, and you dance like a besotted elk.") is effective but crass; both parties are likely to suffer. One of the most elegant techniques is to compliment the target on everything except his most obvious flaw. For example, at a meal consisting of a rice dish, fish, and somewhat inferior cakes for desert, a hostile guest might elaborately praise the rice and fish. The cook will thus be shamed by the poor quality of the cakes.

Insults (real or imaginary) between Sahudese, particularly nobles, are sometimes resolved through duels. A duel might be an actual combat, a cooking contest, or a ritualistic exchange of insults. The challenger gets to choose the type from those appropriate in the given context, along with time and place. The challenged party can decline, but this causes loss of face.

Sahud counts as having a different culture from Megalos, et al, and the penalties for an unfamiliar culture apply (see *p.* B23).

Nonhumans

Nonhumans native to Sahud include halflings and a few gnome and goblin families. A handful of dwarves, elves, half-elves, and orcs have adopted the local customs; most were born elsewhere. There is also one young *dragon* who has integrated himself into Sahudese culture (see *Ah,* p. 153). Most visitors are treated according to their actions: i.e., typically as dangerous raiders or greedy merchants. One exception is dwarves. Both Zarakun and Sahudese society respect tradition, place value on status and honor, and have a deep interest in the best ways of working metals. Traders on both sides have evolved rules for interaction; dwarves are not uncommon in Kinkaku, and some Sahudese are welcome in the caverns of Zarak.

Religious Practices and Spirits

Sahudese religion (see p. 80) revolves around countless "little gods" – spirits. They number in the thousands; virtually every thing, place, trade, or phenomenon has a spirit associated with it. Some are nature-related, associated with trees, streams, hills, animals, and so forth. Others are patrons of specific trades or crafts. Even doorways, beds, and hearths have spirits assigned to them. The gods of the sun, earth, sky, and sea are most important, but even seemingly trivial spirits are accorded respect.

Life as Ritual

Even apart from social interaction, Sahudese have rules for everything from preparing tea to tying a sash. Simply put, if there are two different ways to do something, one way is right, the other way is wrong, and there exists a complex bit of philosophy about why. Some of these rules have practical reasons; a correctly prepared cup of Sahudese tea is excellent. Others are symbolic, and still others are intended to please the relevant spirits. Most of the latter are rationalizations, but some are justified; see below.

Titles in Sahud

Any role in the Sahudese government, place in a clan's hierarchy, or civic post will have a title. These are traditional, poetic, and bear no obvious relation to each other. The question of where the Third Twilight Master stands in relation to the Lord of the Western Spray (or, for that matter, to the Second and Fourth Twilight Masters) is opaque to those not familiar with the system. Sahudese themselves usually figure such things out by watching who defers to who, not by actually asking.

The Sahudese interact with these beings through prayer and sacrifice. When they do so, they expect results. To them, the only reason to call upon a spirit is to request a favor or insure its good will.

Although some ceremonies are conducted with great pomp, most prayers are in private. Wealthy families or clans maintain private altars; most peasant villages have shrines for public use. Otherwise, prayers are said in any appropriate location (e.g., over the cooking pot when praying for an end to famine, on a hilltop when praying for rain).

Unlike Christian clerics or Muslim mullahs, Sahudese priests are not primarily concerned with people's morality; correct behavior is enforced by society. Rather, their role resembles that of a lawyer. They know correct forms of address and preferred sacrifices. Anyone can get minor concessions from the little gods, but priests are best at it. Their profession also involves a great deal of ritual and officiating at rites such as marriage. High-ranking priests know ways to deal with hostile spirits. Training for the priesthood is primarily mental, but physical health is also important, and those with talent learn magic as well.

Visitors to Sahud often regard this system as fundamentally misguided or even diabolic, since they "know" that rocks, streams, and hills don't have their own gods. However, in Sahud they are wrong. Unlike the rest of Ytarria, Sahud has a profusion of incorporeal entities, each with likes, dislikes, and minor powers. Many Sahudese prayers and sacrifices are thus completely effective. Some are not! There is no actual spirit of the sun, for example – though some dishonest spirits *claim* that role.

No one knows why these beings are only found in Sahud. The competing theories are that they do exist elsewhere, and no non-Sahudese has noticed (popular in Sahud); other lands are unsuited to spirits, possibly due to an unknown aspect of mana; the spirits like the way the Sahudese treat them; or the spirits came through the Banestorm into Sahud and simply haven't bothered to spread further yet. Game mechanics for spirits are on p. 199.

Women in Sahud

Most women in Sahud stay at home, perform domestic chores, and obey their husbands. But there are notable and fierce exceptions! Female warriors are accorded great respect, and some clans are governed by powerful matriarchs. Women do not get the same opportunities as men, but a woman who is more competent than a man of the same class usually receives due honor.

Magic

Sahud is mostly normal-mana. However, three hundred-mile-wide craters mark its coast. The islands at the centers of these craters are all high- to very high-mana, and all claimed by the Eyes of Heaven (p. 155). The edges of the craters vary widely in mana level.

Some Sahudese mages are quite powerful; many are masters of the trivial spells that make life comfortable. Showy magic is considered inappropriate for most contexts, including high war. Fireballs and such are acceptable in low war, when used by or against outcasts like thieves and assassins, and in duels between mages. Of course, there are some "acceptable deviants" who break these rules, typically very powerful and noble martial artist/mages.

Warfare

There is no standing army in Sahud. Each clan fights as necessary to defend its land from foreign raiders. However, noble families fight among themselves bitterly and routinely. There are two sorts of wars.

A high war involves picked fighters and specified weapons. The participants rigidly agree upon time and place. Some high wars have additional rules; these may, say, disallow ranged weapons, or *all* weapons. Magic is usually completely prohibited, but there have been exceptions. Normally, only the best of Sahudese society takes part in high war, and nothing is at stake except face.

In low war, on the other hand, anything goes. Poison, assassins, magic, and hordes of screaming mercenaries are all acceptable. There are a few rules, mostly involving treatment of prisoners and how to surrender, but participants occasionally ignore them. Most low wars end with the total destruction of one side. Clans fight low wars over severe insults or for economic reasons, and almost all wars against non-Sahudese are low. It is possible for a high war to degenerate into a low war; the opposite is exceedingly rare.

Martial arts (primarily the ***GURPS*** skills of Judo and Karate) are very common and refined in Sahud. Every noble learns at least the basics, and even commoners can be quite skilled. Advanced martial artists sometimes acquire abilities that seem magical, and indeed may represent an alternate way of channeling mana.

The Law

Crime in Sahud includes most things that are crimes elsewhere (violence, theft), offenses against the spirits, disrespect for the Heavenking, and cheating in high war. Most other potential crimes, such as disrespect for nobles, are handled socially.

The Sahudese legal system is, predictably, baroque and full of ritual. The nobles appoint judges from among their ranks. Some have fixed courts, while others journey from

Poison, assassins, magic, and hordes of screaming mercenaries are all acceptable.

town to town, dealing with cases that have come up since their last visit. Judges are supposed to be incorruptible, but this is usually untrue. The trick lies in offering a bribe without actually suggesting the judge might accept one.

Trials that involve anyone important are all about political maneuvering and face, and are full of ceremony. Judgments can be almost instant, or can drag on for weeks. Foreigners do not get special treatment, and usually lose, due to unfamiliarity with the system. Ignorance of the law is only an excuse if the accused claims to be mentally incompetent; this sometimes works, but those who try it are treated as children by *all* Sahudese thereafter.

Most crimes are punished by fines or flogging. Repeated offenses bring rapidly escalating punishments, culminating in death in the form of 999 lashes. Slavery is unknown, and imprisonment is rare. The few "prisoners" in Sahud are either hostages held by one clan to ensure the behavior of another, or nobles confined by their own families due to recklessly criminal behavior. Nobles lose more face through a flogging than by being a prisoner in their own house.

Adventuring in Sahud

As Yrth's little slice of Asia, Sahud is the ideal location for adventures inspired by Japanese anime or the Hong Kong *wuxia* films of martial chivalry. It has more than its fair share of powerful old monks, hot-headed martial artists, stealthy ninja, noble samurai, and mysterious sorcerers. Rich in potentially unstable high-mana areas and unexplored ruins, Sahud has more than its share of mysteries. It is also a suitable setting for diplomacy and intrigue that make Megalan politicians look like amateurs. The rules of Sahudese society are only flexible around the edges; as one rises higher in society, the dance of power becomes more and more intricate.

Other Ytarrians regard Sahudese as inexplicable and weird. GMs can enforce this bafflement with the players of non-Sahudese characters, but it is just as legitimate to let PCs learn the basics of dealing with Sahudese – after a week or two of culture shock. Weirdness for its own sake wears thin after a while, and 21st-century players are likely to understand the possibilities of Asian adventures.

The Clanholds of Sahud

Sahud is home to a dozen major clans, and innumerable minor ones. Each rules over a territory up to 50 miles across, called a clanhold. The following are intended to be a somewhat representative sampling.

Ah

The head of Clan Ah is a 120-year-old dragon who uses the name Naga-Go. He grew up in the forest west of Kinkaku, and had to deal with occasional samurai sent by the local Ah clan. He eventually decided this was too much trouble, studied Sahudese culture, and presented himself at the gates of the Ah castle. The clan head of the time, Michi, had little choice but to treat him as if he had great status, and Naga-Go maneuvered his way into the power structure of the clan, first as a general, then a mage, then an advisor. In 1993, Michi died of natural causes, and Naga-Go became the Dragon Head.

Naga-Go does most of his politicking verbally, but isn't above terrifying his enemies with a smoking glare. He spends nearly all his time in Ah castle or out hunting in his clanhold. Most nobles *never* refer to his race; it's difficult to do so without either implicitly insulting him, or suggesting the speaker is scared of him. Thus, it's possible for visitors to Sahud to believe that "Dragon Head" is just a metaphor, until they meet him.

Clan Ah is a mercantile clan, specializing in livestock within Sahud, and spice outside. It has made several attempts to compete with Yarohito (p. 154) for the silk trade, unsuccessfully. It has always been noted for its reliance on ninja to humiliate and occasionally assassinate its enemies, and Naga-Go hasn't changed this policy.

Nyodo

Clan Nyodo has a history of aggression against its neighbors, with mixed success. On at least two occasions, it has defeated a rival, only to be immediately embroiled in another conflict before it could enjoy its victory. Akiyasu (age 43), the current clan head, is considering focusing more on political maneuvering, but he doesn't know what to do with the clan's small army. Unemployed soldiers are always troublesome, and most would be unwilling to lose face by going into another trade. Akiyasu's current plan is to send them to attack the Nomad Lands, in the hopes that most of them don't come back.

Sahudese Ninja

As one might expect, Sahudese ninja are stealthy, black-clad, and acrobatic. They are perfectly equipped to act as spies, saboteurs, and assassins. However, in Sahud, ninja are also expected to attack their enemies in non-lethal ways. With face being so important, public embarrassment is a major political tool. Tripwires, buckets of mud, and inflated bladders are all possibilities. Many ninja are also masters of alchemy, and may use mild poisons to induce vomiting, body odor, or sudden changes in skin color. Fake assassinations (e.g., using dull wooden shuriken) are another effective technique, showing that the victim is defenseless. Few Sahudese targets can keep their aplomb through such attacks. Those who can usually find some way to *thank* the perpetrator. "My gratitude for the gift of fertilizer."

That said, ninja are also skilled with swords, improvised weapons, and martial arts. They are more than capable of performing real assassinations when hired to do so.

Tsushuo

In 1985, Clan Tsushuo lost a low war with Clan Nyodo. The few surviving Tsushuo nobles fled the final destruction, and found sanctuary with an allied clan, the Akiuji. The survivors included Hanatatsu, the young daughter of the deceased clan head, and several of her older relatives.

Tsushuo's territory stood abandoned for over a decade. In 1999, the survivors decided to reclaim their land. They had the ancestral castle made livable, and recruited some workers to begin re-clearing the land. Unfortunately, by losing the war and fleeing, all the elders had lost too much face to rule. Hanatatsu, however, was a child at the time, and thus not responsible for the defeat. She is now considered the head of the clan, and her elders pretend to be dead or bedridden, while giving Hanatatsu orders in private. Today she is 22, and many of the orders involve finding a husband and producing an heir. Hanatatsu is not yet sure what she wants, but knows she needs to become a leader in her own right.

Yarohito

One of the richest merchant clans, Yarohito specializes in the silk trade with Megalos. The clan head is Najimatsu, age 26. He is both fiercely intelligent and a powerful mage, but is young for a clan head and has only held the position since his father died in 2002. Prior to then he was known for his wild behavior and vicious sense of humor. The death of his father, however, has focused his attention dramatically. He still lacks many of the necessary skills, but he will undoubtedly mature into his role. He is already a master of political maneuvering, and every competing noble who has been less than perfectly polite to him has lost face thanks to a mysterious and embarrassing accident shortly thereafter.

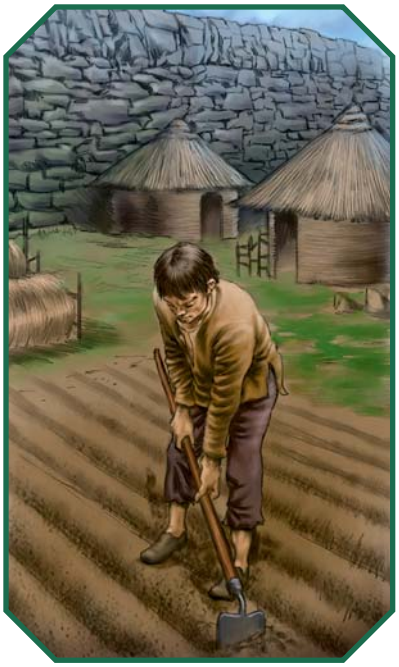
Najimatsu spent some time in Megalos as a child, and speaks perfect Anglish. He would make an excellent patron for non-Sahudese PCs, but has very little tolerance for failure. On the other hand, he is quite practical, and might actually answer questions from foreigners directly and accurately.

Kinkaku and Uulinn

Kinkaku is Sahud's only major city, primary trading center, and capital. The Palace of the Heavenking, Uulinn, stands on a hill overlooking the city. Kinkaku is a large city even by Megalan standards; its streets teem with rickshaws, and vendors' cries fill the air.

History

Shortly after the initial phase of the Banestorm subsided, several families of Asian immigrants discovered the remains of an ancient city on the future site of Kinkaku. They built their houses in and around the remaining walls, and began farming the nearby fields. As the Sahudese discovered magic, they realized that part of the rapidly-growing town was high-mana. Some of the earliest noble mages thus claimed it for their own.



The town quickly became a city; Kinkaku lies at a natural junction of trade routes. By the 1520s, it was by far the largest city in Sahud, and the high-mana area was partly occupied by the palace of the Sadahiro clan. The clan kept the rest of the area as bare grass, surrounded by a wall, to prevent others from exploiting it. In 1523, the head of the Sadahiro clan declared himself the first Heavenking and, fortified with funds from other clans, began expanding his palace across the whole high-mana area.

Later that century, the first Megalans came to Sahud. Their presence in Kinkaku actually caused people to stare, then led to wild speculation, but eventually they left. However, others returned, and within a few decades, some Megalans made Kinkaku their home. Their original townhouses have since evolved into the Foreign Quarter.

In 1869, a relatively minor earthquake led to a major fire, which burned down half of Kinkaku before stopping at the river and the walls of Uulinn. Rebuilding commenced immediately, but the workers found traces of the long-forgotten original ruins among the ash. This stimulated interest in the possibility of ruins elsewhere in Kinkaku. Over the next few decades, property-owners in the city spent an inordinate amount of time digging under their buildings, or taking down and rebuilding architecture to see if any of the supporting walls were old ruins. A few hobbyists are still convinced if they dig a little deeper, they'll find valuable artifacts.

Layout and Architecture

Kinkaku is located at the base of the Sahudese peninsula, on both banks of the River Ayakura. The river is sluggish, and deep enough to accommodate ocean-going vessels. The area northeast of the river is mostly newer construction, dating to the 19th century. The rest of the city can be of any age, though buildings older than 500 years are rare.

The architectural style is "traditional Asian," with flared roofs, round doorways, and rice-paper walls. Much of it seems very oddly laid out or rickety; this is usually evidence that someone was looking for ancient relics. For similar reasons, many buildings have far more basement than they need, though, because of the river, lots of them are damp or flooded. The streets of Kinkaku are crowded and twisty, but usually well-paved.

On a large hill to the east of the city is Uulinn, the Imperial Palace. It is actually far more than a palace. Uulinn is a city itself, covering a seven-acre high-mana tract and housing

The Eyes of Heaven

These four mages serve as the most active intermediaries between the Heavenking and everything outside Uulinn. At least one, and usually two, attends him at any given time. The others will be out enforcing the Heavenking's will. They all spend two or more months of the year at their respective castles. Three are located on the high-mana islands along Sahud's coast, the fourth at its north tip.

Vision of Budding Flowers

This sorceress is, at 33 years old, young for an Eye. She is the only one who came to her position through raw merit. Vision is an excellent administrator, fair but authoritative, and much loved by the people. Her core magical expertise is in the Air and Communication and Empathy colleges but, like all the Eyes, she knows a little about every aspect of thaumatology. Her castle is on the island to the west of Kinkaku.

She has a fiancée to whom she has been engaged since age 2, a samurai whom she admires but barely knows. She does not want to marry until she has retired as an Eye.

Perception of Bountiful Growth

Perception, a solidly-built man of age 60, came to his position by poisoning his predecessor, causing him to become sick in public. The loss of face forced him to retire, and Perception moved into his place. Perception is very aggressive for a Sahudese politician, and occasionally speaks of bringing an ordered society to the rest of the world, one way or another. In pursuit of this, he has begun conspiring with King Durinann II of Zarak (p. 162), regarding the possibility of Sahudese soldiers passing through Zarak to fall upon Caithness. The first step, however, is uniting the armed forces of the Clans into one army.

Perception's magical focus is on Earth, Food, and Illusion and Creation spells. His castle is on the island immediately east of Kinkaku. He is probably the weakest mage of the four Eyes, but not by much.

Glimpse of Falling Leaves

Glimpse is 54 years old, but appears to be a beautiful 25-year-old thanks to her mastery of the Body Control, Healing, and Necromantic colleges. (She is also an expert in Fire spells, among others.) She is the most powerful of the Eyes of Heaven, and the most evil. Her predecessor simply vanished, and Glimpse gets a very ugly smile whenever he is mentioned. She is a brutally efficient administrator, a skilled diplomat, and a cunning sadist. She is also plotting to be the next Heavenking.

Many of her schemes involve looking for power outside Sahud, particularly in the sections of Zarak and Megalos near her island castle at the far east end of the country. Her voyages to and from Kinkaku are on a very fast sailing boat of Megalan manufacture. Among her many eccentricities, when away from proper Sahudese society she relies on her magic to keep warm, and wears much less clothing than is considered proper for a noble.

Sight of Bone-White Snow

Sight is over 90 years old, thin, and as pale as his name. His magical expertise lies in Movement, Protection and Warning, and Water spells. He is also an incredibly skilled martial artist, and goes without bodyguards. He makes his home in a tower in the depths of a pine forest at the north tip of Sahud, traveling back and forth to Kinkaku under his own power, probably via Hawk Flight.

Sight has been an Eye of Heaven longer than any of the others. He negotiated his way into his position through shrewd politicking and blackmail, and holds it the same way. He prefers to only blackmail the corrupt, but he is very much a realist. His primary goals are to preserve Sahud and maintain his own position for as much longer as he can. Sight is aware of most of the plots of his peers and subordinates, but believes that internal conflict is necessary to keep Sahud healthy.

thousands of guards, servants, concubines and courtiers. It is surrounded by a very stout and tall stone wall with only one set of gates. Almost no one is allowed in.

Government

Uulinn houses the Court of Heaven, whose most important members are the Heavenking and his four Eyes of Heaven. No foreigner has ever seen the Heavenking, or even been allowed to enter the Palace grounds. Some Megalans speculate that the Heavenking is a figurehead and prisoner of Sahud's powerful clan heads. The Sahudese regard this suggestion as extremely rude, not to mention illegal. However, it is not entirely wrong. The position of Heavenking has great political power, but many people who have held the title haven't exercised it. This is sometimes personal choice, sometimes inability (e.g., a mental handicap), and sometimes due to threats from other nobles. Further, Heavenkings agree to stay in Uulinn as a check on their power. If a Heavenking walked through the gates and tried to govern in a more hands-on manner, the clan heads would revolt.

The Heavenking is also the high priest of Sahud. Whenever a crisis affecting all of Sahud arises, it is the Heavenking's duty to make prayers and sacrifices to the spirits, on behalf of his subjects. Similarly, a clan leader acts on behalf of his clan, a father for his family. Some traders have suggested that this explains why the Sahudese place such importance on honor or face – if a man has been dishonored or shamed, the gods are less likely to listen to his prayers.

Adventuring in Kinkaku

For visitors, Kinkaku is a strange city full of odd customs, interesting things to buy, unusual foods, and incomprehensible residents. Newcomers will spend two to six weeks just learning to get around and communicate with the locals. At that point, the kinds of trouble they can get into multiply tenfold. The average Sahudese is polite, but the criminals aren't, particularly with clueless foreigners. Sooner or later the party will run into trouble with one of the clans or perhaps stumble across some of the prohibited ruins (p. 157). If they cause enough of a scene, they may even come to the attention of the Eyes of Heaven. This is not necessarily bad, depending on which Eye is involved, but a dutiful Eye will put the stability of Sahud ahead of the welfare of a foreign barbarian.

For residents, Kinkaku is the greatest city in Sahud, the home of the Heavenking, and the center of the universe. It has tens of thousands of people, thousands of spirits, and a million opportunities. It is also the gateway to the barbaric, exciting foreign lands.

The Heavenking's actual role in government apart from ritual aspects is largely legislative. He can create laws at will. His clerks record his utterances, and one copy goes to each clan head. Theoretically that is all that is necessary. However, the clan heads must announce the new law for it to have any meaning. If every clan head disagrees with the law, it effectively vanishes. Conversely, if every clan head but two or three announces the law, the exceptions lose face for their "forgetfulness." Further, if only one head proclaims a new law, the public assumes it's *fake,* and that the clan head is treacherously pretending to speak for the Heavenking! The net effect is that the clans negotiate among themselves over whether and when to announce each new law.

Almost all the Heavenkings have been men, but three women have held the post over the centuries. However, Sahudese always refer to the Heavenking as male, so only the records of Megalans who had very good ties to Sahudese nobles record which ones were female.

The current Heavenking is a 56-year-old man, in good health, and moderately active in government. He has accumulated a number of favors during the 17 years of his rule, and uses them wisely. Both his son and his daughter are dutiful, so he has no worries about the succession. His one weakness as a ruler is his massive disinterest in anything beyond Sahud; he skims the reports his servants bring him, but he barely thinks of the lands beyond his own country as real.

The Trading Clans

Most of the clans are not involved in foreign trade; those that are must have representatives in Kinkaku if they expect to do business. Often, one family within the clan will be responsible for affairs in Kinkaku. Each has its own compound, with a mansion for the family, numerous outbuildings for servants, warehouses, and a building set aside for negotiation.

Since the traders specifically want to do business with visitors, they employ companies of greeters who size up newcomers at the docks, and offer to escort the wealthy ones to their clan's compound. Their Anglish is often broken, but they are even more polite than most Sahudese, well-dressed, and often carry small samples of their clan's wares to entice traders. Greeters usually can recognize travelers who have been to Sahud before.

The trading clans are also interested in getting more information about economic conditions outside Sahud. For this purpose, they employ non-Sahudese, and are always on the lookout for new mercantile spies. A trading family may extend a dinner invitation to surprisingly disreputable foreigners, with the intent of picking their brains during the meal, and possibly offering them a job afterwards.

People of Kinkaku

Just under 95% of people in Kinkaku are Sahudese citizens. Of those, 75% are of predominantly Asian descent, 10% are of some other human race, 10% are halflings, and the last 5% are of another nonhuman race.

The other 5% of the population is resident non-Sahudese, mostly Megalans, mostly merchants and their families. A few families have a Megalan man who married a Sahudese woman, and thus have biracial children. These children tend to find more acceptance among Sahudese than in the miniature Megalan society of the Foreign Quarter. Apart from Megalans, there are a score of resident Caithnessers, a few dozen Zarakun, and a handful of people from elsewhere on the continent.

Places of Interest

The Foreign Quarter occupies a dozen or so city blocks, and is home to resident non-Sahudese. It looks and feels like a little piece of Megalos, complete with sturdy Roman-influenced architecture. Travelers looking for guides or translators can find them here. Some will be Sahudese, some will be Megalans, and a few will be honest.

The merchants who live here are mostly very well off, so it is also an affluent part of town. It is surrounded by much cheaper housing; some of the foreigners employ Sahudese servants, who usually don't live on the premises. Two blocks of the Foreign Quarter consist of even stronger buildings – practically small forts – which are home to Zarakun smiths and traders. These dwarves are very insular, and only honored guests see more than the front rooms of their shops.

Kinkaku has no single open bazaar, but rather a maze of thin streets full of small shops, each apparently specializing in one thing. There is some loose grouping by theme; one street may have nothing but shops selling different parts of chickens, while the next will have one shop for books about the rise of the first Heavenking, one shop for books about Animal spells, one shop for books of poetry about spring, and so on. Finding a specific shop requires years of familiarity or a guide; the shopkeepers themselves are

generally ignorant about anything outside their street.

The Noble and Beneficial Academy is the largest school in Sahud. Its large and beautiful grounds occupy a walled estate on the outskirts of Kinkaku. The Academy handles every age from 4 through 21, and has hundreds of students at any given time. Tuition is very expensive, and the pupils are believed to be Sahud's best and brightest. It does accept non-Sahudese, of whom 50% flunk out in the first year. The curriculum is comprehensive, covering everything from etiquette to history to martial arts. The athletic courses and many of the academic courses are elective; those that teach social graces are not. Students live on campus; earning the right to venture into the city requires exemplary grades and behavior, and is flatly forbidden to all under age 16.

A few examples of the ancient ruins, around which the city was built, are open to the public. Usually consisting of a 20' section of dark stone wall, they are typically surrounded by a carefully sculpted garden designed to show off what is fundamentally a very boring pile of rock. Admission is two yen ($20). Permission to cast spells on the rock is much more expensive (10 yen, $100), and the keepers will absolutely forbid anyone from chipping off a sample.

The Imperial Palace of Uulinn is very much a Forbidden City. The list of people who pass in and out is short, and includes the Eyes of Heaven; clan heads, their designated representative, and very small entourages; accomplished and decorated soldiers promoted to the Imperial Guard; a few servants; and those invited to a personal audience with the Heavenking. This last category is extremely small, amounting to one or two people per year.

Anything being delivered to the palace (food, gifts, reports) is handed off at the gate. Anyone else caught trying to get in is assumed to be an assassin, and may be killed on the spot. Most are simply captured and interrogated; those who seem truly guilty die over the course of weeks.

The walls enclose magnificent gardens, a zoo, natural hot springs, vast treasuries, and magical laboratories, in addition to the Court of Heaven itself, and the Illustrious One's private mansion. The residents include the royal family, other noble families (including a few who are serving as hostages), governmental ministers and clerks, the Imperial Guard, and countless families of servants, most of who have lived within Uulinn for generations.

Zarak

Zarak is the dwarves' name for both the Bronze Mountains and the underground kingdom which lies beneath them. To dwarves, the two are one and the same. Zarak is bordered on the south by Caithness, on the west by the Orclands, on the north by Sahud, and on the east by Megalos. The dwarves trade with their human neighbors, sometimes freely, sometimes grudgingly.

Zarak is the greatest nonhuman kingdom in Ytarria, and the only one generally known to humans. In Christian and Muslim lands, nonhumans live in small, scattered communities, and most acknowledge human rulers. The dwarves, by contrast, are independent and powerful.

Geography

The dwarves claim all the "land" under the mountain, and most of the territory above. There are extensive sections of their border with Sahud, and a few spots by Caithness, where by treaty the surface belongs to the human country. Further into the mountains, the peaks are wild and windswept, though some have concealed watch-posts. The valleys are comparatively warm and fertile. Many hold small farming communities, populated by gnomes, a few surface dwarves, and even some humans. These valleys are connected to each other through mountain passes, but few roads lead to the outside world; the dwarves prefer that any interaction pass underground, where it can be controlled.

The true kingdom of Zarak lies underground. It is possible to travel the length and breadth of Zarak without seeing the sky, and the dwarf tunnels extend thousands of feet down. The many subterranean cities are

smaller than the great human cities, but are still home to hundreds of thousands of people. The dwarves mine for metals both common and precious, for jewels, and for stones with virtues only they know. Some worked-out mines become homes as they search ever deeper. Others become vast mushroom-farms. The dwarves can be self-sufficient on this one food, but they much prefer to combine it with the product of the surface farms and human foodstuffs. All kinds of creatures live in less-frequented tunnels: bats, rats, lizards, great worms, reeks (p. 224), and stranger things. The dwarves exterminate most that they find; they don't willingly share their tunnels.

Each clanhold has many connections to the surface, but only a few that are considered public knowledge. Outside each is a trade-town, where dwarves meet with non-dwarves to buy and sell. Trade-towns are usually collections of blocky stone structures, with minimal decoration. The main road of each leads up to a gate to Zarak.

These gates are usually quite large; if Zarakun are hired to make a 100' statue, they want to be able to get it out the door in one piece. The gates are also ornately carved in the distinctive geometric and crystalline dwarf style, and have many protective spells on them. Within a gate there is 100 yards or so of tunnel devoted to defense. This will not be obvious to visitors; the assorted traps and ambush points are designed to look harmless, or not to be noticed at all. Beyond this area lies a second, smaller reception area, the Halls of Hospitality, open only to the sufficiently trustworthy.

History

Dwarves have lived in Zarak for thousands of years, since long before the Banestorm. They have always been reclusive, with little love for other races. They sought treasures deep within their mountains, concentrating on the subtleties of their own politics and the perfection of their crafts, usually ignoring what went on above them. They caught and enslaved any strangers (usually orcs) who ventured into their underground caverns uninvited. This pre-Banestorm time was marked by several wars, mostly against orcs who settled too close to Zarak and a few involving squabbles with the elves. However, there was one extended dwarf-elf conflict, approximately 1,600 years ago, and to this day, dwarves find it difficult to trust elves.

The outer world crashed in on their solitude when the first backlash of the Bane spell obliterated the southwest tip of Zarak, which had extended hundreds of miles into what is now the Great Desert. Even today the dwarves consider these areas polluted and cursed, and hate to travel there. The High King sent out spies, who reported that Ytarria was altered and scarred, that strange creatures abounded, and that it looked like a great elf spell had gone awry. This confirmed the Zarakun opinion of elves,

The Banestorm Underground

The Banestorm's effects don't usually penetrate through dirt or stone more than a yard or two. In those cases where buildings have been brought to Yrth, some of their foundations come along, but never with earth underneath exceeding 8'. Thus, very few Banestorm immigrants appeared within the tunnels of Zarak. The exceptions manifested close to surface entrances or in areas near the Great Desert. Some of the latter deposited shockingly weird reptiles and insects, possibly from Gabrook, which the dwarves mostly exterminated. How the local banestorms may have affected the gates to Zarak is unknown and perhaps not even recognized as a possibility.

and they once again closed their gates to shut out the external chaos.

Recovering in their slow and sure way, it was many years before the dwarves paid attention to the new inhabitants of Ytarria. In the year 1235, though, a scouting party from Megalos ventured into what the soldiers called the Bronze Mountains. Initial encounters were bloody, but the humans were persistent, and eventually they thought to offer trade instead of warfare.

From this beginning, an increasingly strong economic relationship has developed between the dwarven kingdom and its neighbors. Dwarves trade freely in many areas, selling raw materials and exquisitely crafted items, and taking away cloth and delicacies unavailable in their caves. However, they are still reclusive. While they do allow humans to co-exist on the surface of Zarak, they are very particular about who they let into their underground cities. Few humans have witnessed their full splendor.

Dwarf Women

Dwarves know full well that a society can survive if it loses most of its men, but not if it loses most of its women. Thus, they expect dwarf women to stay away from the dangerous surface world, and they are not allowed to join the army and guard the borders. They usually end up in roles similar to the traditional ones for human females: taking care of the home, cooking the food, and raising the children.

However, any dwarf woman who wants weapons training can get it. If Zarak should be invaded, the old women are expected to defend the young, those who aren't pregnant protect those who are, and they all shield their children, to the last. The few orcs who have returned alive from an invasion of Zarak say that the men fight with strength and precision, but that the women are far more terrifying.

Further, craft skills are just as respected among dwarf women as among men, and the dwarves make no distinctions between feminine and masculine crafts. Roughly a fifth of the Grand High Crafters are women. Even those women who stay at home will have a skill they practice in their free time, with the results on display or in daily use. (For example, the eating utensils might be a beautiful set that would probably fetch a steep price in Megalos.)

There is also a perception among dwarves – rightly or not – that women have more money sense than men. This probably evolved because a dwarf man can't carry his money around all the time, and the person he trusts most is his wife. As a result, the great banks of Zarak are all headed by women, and every successful trading house has several women dwarves with keen financial sense on staff, if not in charge.

Society

Dwarf society is about tradition. The lives of the Zarakun have not changed much in thousands of years, and the ways which worked for their ancestors still work. Old traditions are discarded only when they become obviously harmful. New ideas must prove themselves over generations before becoming common.

Social Rank

Zarak is ruled by seven "brother kings," one of whom is the High King of all the dwarves. Even dwarves of other areas, such as Thulin's Folk in the Whitehood Mountains, acknowledge the authority of the High King. The seven kings rule over clans in different parts of the mountains; each is known by the name of its leader.

After their kings, the dwarves respect craftsmanship. The most skilled crafters wield great influence, though they spend most of their time in the workshop or teaching. Each high crafter attracts young followers who serve him in return for training. Though dwarves don't have formal guilds, this serves essentially the same purpose. Until a craftsman is recognized as a high crafter in his own right, he is considered to be a student and vassal of one of his clans' high crafters. Next to the seven hereditary clans, these are the most powerful political entities in the Kingdom.

The next level of political power is the local governors., who will always defer to high crafters. Dwarves view management the same way humans view ironworking: a useful and honest job, of no particular prestige. That said, a dwarf who is truly interested in administration can forge his domain into a paragon of efficiency.

Joining the Zarakun army is a road to respect; dwarves admire those who defend the homeland from the chaos of the outside world. Successful traders are also respected, but most dwarves consider moving things around to be secondary to making them in the first place. A dwarf aphorism goes, "If you can't be skilled, be strong. If you can't be strong, be rich."

Dwarves who live on the surface, by choice or social pressure, are of lower standing than those who live underground. The only people of even lower class are exiles, criminals, and slaves.

Zarak Social Status

Level	*Examples*
7	The Seven Kings (including the High King)
6	Grand High Crafters, Kings of Separated Clans
5	High Crafters
4	Governors, Officers
3	Soldiers, Crafters
2	Trademasters
1	Ordinary Dwarves and Gnomes
0	Surface-dwelling Dwarves and Humans
-1	Criminals, Exiles
-2	Slaves

Visiting the Dwarves

How far dwarves let people into their homes depends on how much they trust them. Between dwarves, strangers are allowed in the shop, acquaintances may visit in the outermost room of the home, and friends are welcome anywhere but the bedroom. With non-Zarakun, this situation is exaggerated. Complete strangers are not allowed underground at all; the dwarves meet with them in the trade-towns, often some distance from the entrance. Long-time business partners are permitted through the gate, and into the Halls of Hospitality behind it. Trusted allies may even see the exterior of a dwarf's home, but only those non-dwarves who have fought and bled beside a Zarakun are allowed inside.

Non-Dwarves

Humans, gnomes, and a few others live on the surface of the dwarves' mountains, usually with their permission and sufferance. For the most part, they are farmers who make their living in trade with the folk beneath. Underground, virtually the entire population is dwarves and slaves. No more than a dozen families of gnomes choose to live within Zarak. Of the other races, there are possibly 20 living individuals, no more, who have been accepted fully as Zarakun. Most are human, but two are halflings and one is a goblin. All are noted craftsmen and warriors and would serve as good contacts for human parties venturing into Zarak, although their aid cannot be relied upon.

Slaves are the most common non-dwarven residents of Zarak. Most are outsiders who crept into dwarven lands as thieves or spies. The dwarves purchased others from human slavers. Most slaves work in nasty jobs that don't require creativity, such as transporting sewage to the mushroom tunnels or the surface farms. The life of these slaves is not happy; the dwarves treat them with the same concern they would a pick or a shovel. A useful tool is maintained as long as it's useful, and no longer. A slave too old, sick, or injured to continue has the choice of a painless death, or being sent through the nearest gate to the surface, to fend for himself.

Slavery is not universal throughout Zarak. Some dwarven rulers don't permit it; others do. It seems to be a matter of personal taste, though dwarves never enslave other dwarves.

Magic

Zarak has normal mana, with some minor local variations, particularly near the Great Desert and the craters on the Sahudese coast. Many dwarves are competent mages. Like the other native races of Yrth, they consider magic to be just another force of nature – one that can be manipulated in very useful ways. Dwarves concentrate primarily on Earth and Fire magic, and on the creation of magical objects.

The best weaponry, enchanted or otherwise, comes from the dwarven smiths living deep within Zarak. Since dwarves tend to focus on enchanting, there are relatively few dwarven battle mages in the Megalan style. There is currently lively political debate on whether those who exist should continue to be part of the army on an ad hoc basis, or whether there should be a dedicated magical defense corps.

Law

Dwarven laws were made for dwarves, and rarely concern anyone else. They require respect for authority, for property, and for written and verbal contracts. They also emphasize heeding one's elders and not damaging things of craft and beauty. Clan elders resolve most disagreements based on thousands of years of precedent.

The majority of dwarves are law-abiding, and few are violent except when protecting their homes, family, or precious objects. Punishment is usually through enforced community works, fines, or temporary banishment. Violent criminals end up locked in an unlit cave for a month with a limited supply of mushrooms. The ultimate punishment, however, is permanent exile, followed by death if the offender returns.

Surface Dwarves

Any dwarf dwelling on the surface (which likely includes most dwarven PCs) is either an exiled criminal, someone who has been temporarily banished, or a malcontent. Some of the last are forced out by social pressure; most are either interested in seeing the world, or trying to get rich quickly through trade or mercenary soldiering. But to the Zarakun, nobody who isn't completely happy underground is a good neighbor. It should be noted that working in the trade-towns carries no stigma. The dwarves who meet with other races there are enduring unpleasant conditions to do an important job. They are respected and well paid. The same holds true of the occasional ambassador or spy.

Surface dwarves who return to Zarak receive treatment appropriate to their slightly lower status. If they come with non-dwarf companions, this will likely blend into the inevitable grumbling about strangers. If they choose to stay, they are accepted as true Zarakun after a year or so.

Dwarves don't talk about this distinction much with non-dwarves. If they are criminals, obviously they may want to hide their crimes. They may also simply be ashamed of their "deviance." Many, however, don't want to insult their non-dwarf friends by admitting that dwarves think *all* surface-dwellers are a little crazy.

There are, of course, dwarven communities in some large cities, where generations of honest, upright dwarves have lived and raised their families on the surface. Zarakun who are aware of this find it disturbing!

Technology in Zarak

Zarak, like the rest of Ytarria, is TL3, with some TL4 elements. However, dwarves recognize good engineering when they see it, and Earth artifacts have piqued the interest of some. Other more traditional dwarves believe this strange human science can only lead to trouble. In most of Zarak, the latter opinion holds sway.

The pro-technology faction began in the late 16th century, when rumors about the new humans in Araterre filtered back to Zarak. Gunpowder, if real, had obvious uses in mining, and clockwork sounded interesting as well. Since then, the pro-technologists have endeavored to locate and interrogate new Banestorm immigrants. This is rarely productive – many of their recent detainees go on about "computers" for hours – but occasionally the dwarves learn something.

All this has had little day-to-day effect on Zarak. A few dwarven scholars work long hours trying to make practical steam engines, and others in staunchly pro-technology areas use limited amounts of gunpowder for mining. They keep this as secret as only dwarves can. Not only do they not want to give up any advantage, but well-connected dwarves know that Megalos is resolutely anti-gunpowder, and that the Empire wouldn't hesitate to invade a neighbor that wasn't.

Warfare

The army of Zarak consists mostly of guard units. Every entrance to the Land Under the Mountains has its defenders, and others keep a lookout from the mountain tops, or patrol the borders above and below ground. These units are made up mostly of young dwarves, with a few seasoned captains. They are armed with axes, mauls, and crossbows, which they use well, but they are intended to keep out thieves and spies, not to repel genuine invasions. When invasions do occur – usually from the Orclands – all able-bodied dwarves of both sexes fight fiercely in defense of their homes.

After a tour in the guards, some dwarves join mercenary bands, who hire themselves out to employers who need good infantrymen or military engineers. Dwarves make brilliant sappers and saboteurs. Wars between dwarf-clans are not unknown, but the last one ended two dwarven generations ago.

Seven Brother Kings

The Seven Brother Kings each rule one of the mighty clans of Zarak. This collective title is symbolic only; the kings are not actually related. They choose one of their number to be high king; his clan becomes the High Clan, and his word takes on slightly more power. The current high king is Ekarron III, a hearty young dwarf only 115 years old. His clan, known as Ekarron's Folk, inhabit the great clanhold of Ekarriel, whose capital is the city of the same name. From oldest to youngest, the other six brother kings are Morkagast, Durinann II, Thransiravst, Solginyarl, Blainthir VII, and Ginnargrim III.

Each oversees the health and welfare of his clan, as well as the growth and prosperity of its living and mining areas. They are also responsible for standing guard over the entrances to their caverns, and governing trade with the outside. Each brother king is autonomous, though they often work together.

Each clan has its own policies governing trade, mining, dealings with outsiders, slavery, and other matters of interest only to the dwarves. Disagreements over these policies form the basis of Zarak's politics. Currently, the fundamental issues are relations with Megalos, the elves, and "everyone else"; adoption of human technology; and the best role for battle wizards in warfare.

High King Ekarron III

Ekarron is a very well-educated and well-spoken dwarf with an excellent memory for facts. He believes in keeping a subtle but firm hand on his Kingdom. It may take him a while to act on a given issue, but once he does, he's decisive. He is very well liked by his clan and the other six kings, as shown by their willingness to name him as high king despite his youth. He is an accomplished armourer and jeweler. Dwarves who have earned his favor may receive an axe or ring he made himself.

He has never left Zarak, and has had very little interaction with non-dwarves. His clan is the most removed from human lands. He considers humans a good influence on surface matters, as long as they stay out of his lands. He won't support Zarak-wide actions against Megalos; he believes the Empire is too dangerous to antagonize. However, he has no problem with individual clans boycotting the Imperials. He is in favor of interaction with the other peoples of Ytarria, and strongly supports an organized magical defense corps – again, because he fears the Empire. He has no opinion on human technology.

Ekarron's clanhold lies in the extreme northwest of Zarak; its only exterior border is with the Orclands. It thus has only one public entrance, with a small, heavily-defended, but easy to abandon, trade-town, where the dwarves occasionally do business with the human tribes of the Orclands. The people of Ekarriel are generally contented and happy with their king. Many spend time in the army (it seems orcs never learn), but few become mercenaries afterwards, since all the demand is far to the southeast.

Many dwarves in Ekarriel specialize in woodwork. (Most dwarves prefer stone, but wood definitely has its uses.) Well-armed lumber parties gather trees from the edges of the Orclands and the occasional forests on the surface of Zarak, bringing them underground for chopping and carving. This woodwork is Ekarriel's chief export to the other clans.

King Blainthir VII

Blainthir (age 135) is a tough but likable dwarf who excels in combat. He's none too bright, but he lets his governors worry about the administrative details, much to the benefit of his clan. Blainthir spends much of his time with his hand-picked guard who defend the main eastern entrance to Zarak. Despite his status, he is often on the front line when a conflict occurs.

A very charismatic figure, most of his clan loves him for his bravery and courage. However, he is a hopeless clod when it comes to politics, believing everything he's told. His current stance is pro-Megalos, anti-elven (his clanhold is only a hundred miles from the Blackwoods), and anti-technology, but that could change if a different governor gets his ear.

Blainthir's clanhold is more factionalized than the rest, probably due to its hands-off leader. Many dwarves have become very rich trading with Megalos, while others have found the Imperials to be untrustworthy. Opinions on the Sahudese are similarly split; most dealings with their northern neighbors go smoothly, thanks to centuries of protocol, but Glimpse of Falling Leaves (p. 155) is an unsettling neighbor. Some Zarakun blame her for lost patrols, suggesting she either kidnapped them, or they fell prey to things that escaped from her island. Most of Blainiel's economy is based on being a middleman between Megalos and the rest of Zarak, but it is also an exporter of gemstones and a particularly tasty breed of mushroom.

King Durinann II

Durinann is an unimpressive leader. Were it not for the fundamental conservatism of the clans, he would have been replaced years ago. Once a vibrant young dwarf, Durinann has grown lazy in his later years. He recently celebrated his 160th birthday, and now can barely be bothered to stir from his quarters to visit the forge. Consequently he keeps a very loose rein on his kingdom, almost letting it run itself. However, the existing mines are beginning to run dry, and the high crafters are starting to grumble. His current quick-fix is closer ties with Sahud through Perception of Bountiful Growth (p. 155), but this solution could easily blow up in his face. Durinann is pro-human, and in favor of a magical defense corps, but has no strong opinions otherwise.

The Durinel clanhold borders Sahud and a small part of the Orclands. Its people have a very close relationship with the Sahudese, and most of the dwarves living in Kinkaku's Foreign Quarter (p. 156) are from Durinel. Some artists in this clanhold have even adopted Sahudese styles, and the results are receiving cautious praise elsewhere in Zarak. Like Blainiel, Durinel makes a lot of money from trade, but the clan also exports iron, steel, and gold.

King Ginnargrim III

Ginnargrim is the sole remaining member of his clan's noble line, except for his two young sons. His clan once ruled over the now-lost halls in the southernmost tip of Zarak, and it was there that many of his ancestors were killed. Another freak accident, this time the collapse of a newly cut mine, took the life of his father and elder brother, leaving only Ginnargrim. At 112 years old, he is the youngest of the Brother Kings. He is a shy, retiring dwarf, suffering from a speech impediment that keeps him out of society.

Ginnargrim is only too aware of his own shortcomings as a leader, and he leaves public appearances to his governors. In fact, he is a capable administrator, an extraordinary craftsman, and a competent mage, well deserving of the position he holds. However, few are aware of this, and most clansmen can't wait until Ginnargrim's sons are old enough to replace their father.

Because of the impact the Banestorm had on his family's fortunes, Ginnargrim is intolerant towards elves. He doesn't like humans much, either, but they make good trading partners. He prefers the current arrangement of battle wizards scattered throughout the army, and is against studying human technology.

Ginnargrim's clanhold is much smaller than the others. Parts were vaporized 1,000 years ago. Other areas, technically still part of Zarak, the dwarves consider cursed, and others still are more obviously dangerous, being full of hostile creatures. In particular, some of the strange giant insects in the western areas seem almost intelligent (see p. 192). The dwarves of Ginnrel, however, do not complain about their hardships, and do brisk business with Caithness. The clan is known for its beautiful red-veined gray granite, and is also an exporter of silver. However, it imports proportionately more food than other clans, due to generally poor fertility on the surface.

King Morkagast

Morkagast became king only 10 years ago, when his father Morthrinn died after a long illness. Few of the other Brother Kings liked Morthrinn, and some still hold a grudge against his son. Morkagast (age 173) is a merely adequate administrator, but an immensely skilled craftsman. He is the visible leader of the pro-technology faction, and is always on the lookout for Earth artifacts or new Banestorm immigrants. He is also moderately anti-elf and pro-Megalos.

The dwarves of Morriel do a reasonable amount of business with both Sahud and Megalos. They have less success as middlemen than the dwarves of Blainiel, probably due to the unpopularity of their king. Morriel's chief export is copper, but the clanhold is also renowned for its mages. Magery appears to be thick in the blood of many Morriel families, and dwarves from this area northeast of Caithness' Arvey often become powerful enchanters and wizards.

King Solginyarl

Solginyarl (age 140) is one of the old guard, an extremely conservative dwarf. He greatly disliked Morthrinn, and despises Morkagast for his untraditional ways. He now goes out of his way to foil him at every turn. Solginyarl is a skilled public speaker, but behind closed doors runs his kingdom in a brusque, efficient manner. He is against dealings with any

non-dwarves, very anti-technology, and mildly against creating a corps of battle wizards.

Solginyarl's clanhold borders Megalos, Caithness, and Sahud, but does little trade with them, largely due to his prejudices. Most of what trade exists is, regrettably, in slaves. Dwarves of Solginel are a good market for Megalan slave dealers, despite the dwarven tendency to haggle down to the last copper coin. Solginel's chief exports are marble, iron, and steel.

King Thransiravst

Thransiravst is a merry, jovial sort of dwarf, heartily middle-aged at 145. He's also busy, industrious, and a talented and gifted leader, so his clansmen choose to overlook his sometimes inappropriate sense of humor. During his reign, he's increased his clan's productivity and trade greatly. Now his clan eats better than most dwarves, and they are pressed to make enough items to keep up with the human demand. Thransiravst is pro-human, mildly pro-elf, but has no strong opinion on Megalos, the organization of battle wizards, or technology.

Thulin's Folk

Thulin's Folk are a dwarf clan living beneath the Whitehood Mountains. Despite their separation from Zarak, they acknowledge its High King as sovereign, and pay homage by sending a selection of their finest work each year. Thulin X is an ancient dwarf, over 265 years old. Though he technically has only Status 6, even High King Ekarron stands when he enters the room, in deference to his great age and skill. He has retreated from his role as leader, content to concentrate on his lifework – a magical item that he's been working on for over a century.

Meanwhile, his governors take care of business for him. Thulin's Folk trade openly and freely with the Northmen who live near their lands. They do not willingly trade with Megalos, preferring to send their own agents to Caithness or Sahud rather than sell their heritage to the Megalans. Thulin's personal patience for the quick-lived, slick-tongued humans has long since vanished. Thirty-five years ago, he petitioned Zarak for a total boycott of the Imperial humans. His request was denied, and he returned home disillusioned with the other dwarven kings and vowing to maintain his own boycott. Even Thulin doesn't know how close the Seven Brother Kings came to granting his wish.

Thranel's only exterior border is with Caithness, and its dwarves do good business with the humans there. Its exports are extremely varied, including gold, a very pretty type of green granite, some of Ytarria's best diamonds, and furs from a silver-coated fox that only lives in the mountains above Thranel. The ever-practical dwarves are careful not to hunt the fox too heavily, which, of course, keeps the price up.

The Orclands

Beyond the Great Desert, west of Caithness and Zarak, lie the barren and perilous Orclands, home to few races other than their namesakes. Humans, centaurs and giants roam the northern provinces, keeping well away from the volatile orcs, who seem to be benefiting from new, frighteningly more efficient leadership. Still, the majority of this region is unpopulated except for roving predators and other animals. Rumors of elven ruins as yet unplundered sometimes draw adventurers seeking riches.

Geography

The Orclands reach as far as Sahud in the north, and also touch the Djinn Lands, though the exact border is uncertain; it probably depends on how much privacy the Djinn (p. 174) desire at any given time. At their closest, the Orclands come within 150 miles of Caithness, and indeed there have been a few attempts by Caithnessers to cross the Great Desert and establish colonies. (See *Castle Defiant,* p. 164.) Parts of the Orclands have low mana, especially those lands adjoining the Great Desert. Other areas are normal mana, and there are a few isolated high mana spots.

The Orclands are a desolate country of cool, open steppes, scattered forests, and rocky hills, populated by antelope, bison, wolves, yaks, and monsters. They see only occasional rain; most clouds pass overhead and don't shed their water until they reach the mountains. A few rivers wind down from the highlands into the sea.

History

The Orclands were very thinly populated before the Banestorm. There were two or three nomadic orc tribes, a few well-defended gnome villages, and some elves in the forests. The Banestorm brought no humans to the area, only centaurs and a few giants in the north, some kobolds, and a scattering of minotaurs and stranger monsters. The majority had no trouble adapting, though most of the kobolds were eaten by something bigger within a few decades.

Over the next few centuries, people of Mongolian and American Indian descent began filtering into the Orclands from the northeast as Sahud became more civilized. These nomads quickly came to dominate the region, following the bison and antelope on their seasonal migrations. A few settled in the forests. Others tried raiding the gnome villages. They had mixed success; the gnomes were well-defended, but were used to considerably dumber attackers. Most of the gnomes eventually moved into the valleys of Zarak. Many of the elves quietly moved away to the south; others found kindred spirits among the newcomers. The humans were usually at peace with each other and the centaurs, giants, and orcs, though there

were fierce tribal wars from time to time, mostly against the orcs.

The area remained unchanged until the end of the 18th century, when the Megalans began pushing orcs west out of the lands that would become Caithness. This culminated in 1812, when Caithnessers drove the last major tribe of orcs into the Great Desert. Over a mere few decades, thousands of orcs were displaced into what the rest of the world would come to call the Orclands.

The next century saw constant conflict, as the orcs pushed everyone else north. Eventually, enough people on both sides had died that there was no longer any need to fight. None of the non-orcs trusted the orcs (and vice-versa), but as long as everyone respected each other's territory, fighting stayed at a minimum.

Orc populations tend to follow cycles, and one boom came in the 1920s. The pressure led to several orc tribes re-crossing the Great Desert to invade Caithness. Most of them died, but this removed the excess population and enshrined several Caithness lords as heroes.

Since then, the Orclands have been relatively stable. Caithnessers and Zarakun watch their borders, and the non-orcs of the north keep a wary eye on the orcs of the south. Future conflicts may be inevitable, but for now there is peace.

The population of the Orclands is currently 65% orc, 25% human, 5% centaur, 4% giant, and 1% other (mostly dwarves). The orc population, however, is currently on the rise.

The Orc Tribes

The orcs make up a dozen or so great tribes, and many lesser ones. Most are nomadic, traveling the steppes in the wake of the great herds of bison, or looking for new pastures for their goats and yaks. Despite their ferocious reputation, most of a nomadic tribe's time is spent hunting and caring for their livestock. However, they are forever nursing grudges from the last round of battles, and planning for the next one. Most orc tribes are TL2, though those run by outcast dwarves are sometimes able to sustain a full TL3 society.

Castle Defiant

Castle Defiant was the main stronghold of humans dwelling in the southeast Orclands. Its folk were of Caithness stock, having settled there after the last orc wars of 80 years ago.

After the orcs were defeated, Lord Jerrik, one of the leaders of the Caithness forces, decided to remain on the far side of the desert and carve out a kingdom for himself. The king of the time considered him foolish and greedy, and told him not to expect any help. Jerrik agreed, and the king's men returned to Caithness, leaving Jerrik and a small band of followers.

For many years, all went well, and the colony prospered. As time went on, it became more and more self-sufficient, and the need to travel across the desert diminished. Trade with the Zarakun eventually made contact with Caithness unnecessary.

But beginning in 1985, several tribes of orcs, led by outcast dwarves, began systematically wiping out the humans of the area. The humans resisted fiercely, holding out for a full nine years, but in 1994, Castle Defiant was finally in danger of falling. Its lord, Kerin, sent to Caithness for help, but none came (see pp. 110-11 for why).

Today Castle Defiant is the headquarters of the dwarf Bulgaren and his orc followers. He plans to use it as a base for attacks on Caithness and eventually on Zarak, though his reasons are unknown. There are several ruined human villages in the area; Bulgaren currently survives by trading items scavenged from these to nomadic orcs for food and other supplies.

The names of orc tribes, when translated, are usually violent or grotesque. Some of the most powerful are the Blackskulls, the Bloody Fangs, the Carrion-Eaters, the Death Birds, and the Poisoned Talons. They range in size from a few dozen to several hundred, though coalitions of tribes can have headcounts in the thousands.

Betrayal and Honor

Orcs breed like locusts and often behave like them. From the day that they are born they are in fierce competition with other orcs, especially their own siblings, for advantage and survival. Thus, they are thoroughly accustomed to betraying each other. An orc sees nothing wrong with this, and expects it as normal. Orcs do cooperate, but only as long as everyone involved sees more short-term advantage in working together than in betrayal. Orcs smart enough to work toward long-term advantage are scarce. Orcs don't usually bear grudges for long, although enough exceptions exist to make reliance on this suicidal.

Smart orcs who have extended contact with humans may develop a dim understanding of loyalty and trust. Although they would never admit it, they find such things terrifying. To orcs, humans and similar races are long-lived, scheming creatures who sacrifice their own honor to give each other power, and who plot together in devious ways for incomprehensible ends.

Orcs measure their social standing in terms of things controlled. The drawback is that someone else may steal any given item. One way to prevent this is to destroy the item first. This leads to the orcish concept of "honor," which is the record of one's prowess – and is measured in things destroyed and thus utterly controlled. An orc tribe which destroys a human town gains far more renown than one which merely conquers and plunders it for movable goods.

Orcs with high honor may rule as chiefs; their followers refrain from betraying them out of fear that anyone that destructive would wreak terrible vengeance. Larger groups than the tribe are rare, because too many underlings would see short-term advantages in betraying their leaders.

Daily Life

The nomadic life and the orc concept of "honor" preclude orcs from having very many possessions. A typical family will have a yurt, weapons, some basic tools and cooking equipment, barely adequate clothing, and a herd of sheep, goats, yaks, or horses, or partial ownership of a tribal herd. Daily life involves tending the livestock, hunting wild animals, eating the results, performing minimal maintenance on possessions, and getting into minor fights.

Orcs have no gender roles that aren't strictly biological. Orc women remain fully active up until the very last weeks of pregnancy, and fiercely protect their babies, but otherwise make their way in orc society like any orc man, through force and guile.

Magic

Magery usually goes unrecognized among the orc tribes, but those who are aware of their power often become quite strong, and seek out apprentices to bolster their stature. Orc mages love battle-spells, scrying magic, and, of course, insidious destruction.

Warfare

Orcish tribal warfare is characterized by ever-shifting alliances and coalitions. Each tribe has its hereditary allies and enemies, as well as temporary ones. The orcs' naturally competitive nature keeps any one faction from becoming too powerful. Orc chieftains are incapable of getting along for long unless there is a common enemy to fight or plunder to steal.

While orcs respect the skill and destructive power of other races' warriors and wizards, they would prefer to see them firmly under orcish control. If they believe other beings are plotting against them, orcs usually take the safest course and try to destroy the threat for the immediate gain in honor.

Law

The only generally accepted law is survival of the meanest. Those who can cow others into obedience can do whatever they like, for as long as the victims put up with it. Punishment tends to be quick and brutal: death in hard times, enslavement if there is a use for slaves at the moment. Orcs don't have prisons, and maimed tribesmen are not useful. Chieftains sometimes torture severe offenders publicly, to inspire fear.

Likewise, orcs have no real conception of justice; the nearest thing they understand is revenge, which serves to discourage others from future betrayals, or comes from reflexive anger. The orcish word for "traitor" isn't insulting, but rather a factual description of someone who followed their own self-interest.

Government

Orc tribes each have a single chieftain, who is always powerful and violent. Larger tribes dominate smaller ones in a similar fashion. Leadership is not hereditary; it changes whenever someone tougher than the current chieftain comes along.

Orcs see battle throughout their lives. This makes the survivors mean, tough, dirty fighters. It is the privilege of a chieftain to only fight those battles he deems worthy, sending underlings out to handle trivial foes. Much of a chieftain's prowess is measured by how many battles he can avoid.

Occasionally powerful non-orcs (usually dwarves, humans, or undead) succeed in taking control of orc tribes by demonstrating great destructive prowess and a willingness to take truly terrible revenge. Orcs respect this, and will follow such leaders. However, this does not change their attitude toward treachery. Leaders who don't treat underlings as property and occasionally betray them as well are regarded as feeble and honorless. A leader who slaughters a few of his orcish minions for trivial reasons may be acting intelligently; it lets the other orcs know where they stand.

Crafters

Craftsmanship comes hard to orcs, who see honor in destruction, not creation. However, enough canny orcs see the benefits of such skills to keep tribes supplied with weapons, armor, and leatherwork. Orcish craftsmen must necessarily be clever traders, who keep a close eye on the hierarchy of their tribes. They're among the few orcs who don't have to destroy things to safeguard their honor, because they can always replace stolen items. They can also dispense honor to others by trading them goods for immediate destruction. This gives crafting orcs a near-magical aura among other orcs, despite the typically poor quality of their work and their tendency to avoid combat.

Many tribes have no active craftsmen whatsoever, finding it easier to take equipment from others. Such tribes see crafting orcs as strange, and despise "those who seek to trade in honor" – although they may enslave crafters, given the chance.

Other Races

Non-orc races play a variety of roles in the Orclands. Like the orcs, most are TL2 at best.

Humans

The humans of the Orclands are primarily descended from Mongols and American Indians. Some tribes are thoroughly genetically mixed, while others are still monoracial. Even the latter tribes have seen significant cultural mingling.

In broad terms, the life of human nomads is similar to that of the orcs to the south; both live in similar lands, hunt the same wild animals, and raise the same domesticated ones. However, human nomadic life tends to be a lot more comfortable, due to better crafters, less violence, and no tendency to destroy useful things. A well-off nomad will have a yurt carpeted in multi-colored rugs, a large herd of fat sheep, a trading stock of goat wool, and possibly a prized dwarf-crafted weapon.

Not all humans in the Orclands are nomadic. Permanent villages exist on the coast and in the larger forests. The residents mostly survive through hunting and fishing, but a few, far from orc-held lands, actually have farms, and trade agricultural goods with visiting nomads.

Humans bear the brunt of any orc attacks, and those who live the furthest south are fierce and hardened warriors. They hold their own, despite orc breeding rates and ferocity, because they have better tacticians and more determination; a human tribe under pressure hangs together, while orcs are prone to in-fighting when they are either winning a fight or losing badly. Humans have learned to exploit orc psychology; for example, it's usually worth the difficulty to kill an orc tribe's leader, because his lieutenants will probably fall to fighting among themselves to succeed him, whereas a human tribe in the same circumstances might well swear revenge under an acknowledged heir. Some human leaders are even trying to organize an alliance of tribes to wipe out the orcs. While outnumbered better than two to one, the human ability to cooperate means this plan is not as far-fetched as it sounds. Unfortunately, orcs' near-constant breeding means they are singularly able to recover from anything less than than complete extinction.

Outcast Dwarves

Most dwarves who are exiled from Zarak go to human countries, but some travel west. These are usually the worst of the worst, tough criminals with little respect for others. Some become hermits, others join orc tribes as crafters, and still others set out to rule.

A number of orc tribes, such as the Blackskulls, are led by outcast dwarves. Most of them are better organized than a typical orc tribe, and some are effectively small armies, run by dwarves who want revenge on Zarak. These have been responsible for a number of raids on Caithness over the past 20 years (see *Castle Defiant*, p. 164), and a smaller number of forays into Zarakun territory. As yet they are not much of a threat, but that could change.

Frontier and Tribal Adventuring

The Orclands are one of the last frontiers in Ytarria, though they're far less mysterious than the southwest (p. 173). Caithnesser Humans have made several attempts to expand into the area, with no success thus far. Once the Caithness Civil War is over, however, others will try again. Leading colonists across the desert, dealing with hordes of orcs, and creating a new country could easily be the focus of an epic campaign.

Of course, it's equally valid to play orcs who, after centuries of being pushed west by land-hungry humans, decide to push back. Everything west of the Blackwoods (p. 99) was once orc territory and, while it would be immensely difficult to reclaim even part of Caithness, let alone Megalan territory, orcs rarely back down from a challenge. Rumor is, disenchanted dwarves are exacerbating the problem; Zarak may hire adventurers to deal with the exiles permanently.

Among the tribes, even day-to-day life can be an adventure. There are plenty of wild animals to hunt, some of them exceedingly dangerous. Conflict between orcs and everyone else is common, and war between human tribes is not unknown. Parties searching for easy treasure won't find it here; they run a good chance of getting caught in the middle of an intertribal orc war. And, as one of the most sparsely populated parts of Ytarria, the Orclands hold proportionately more ancient secrets yet to be discovered.

Giants

Giants tend to think of orcs as pesky nuisances, but understand that a small horde can bring even a colossal giant down. A few giants count on simply intimidating orcs into seeking easier prey, but others have allied with one side or the other. During any orcish incursion into the north, giants can be found on the front lines of the defense, swinging away with their clubs. There will sometimes be a giant or two on the other side – smart giants have no trouble acquiring a tribe of orc lackeys. In peacetime, giants mostly keep to themselves; their hunting style is incompatible with that of centaurs and humans.

Centaurs

The centaurs of the northern Orclands would prefer to keep to themselves, but centuries of orc attacks have made that impossible. As the most mobile of the non-orc peoples, centaur messengers keep the scattered northern tribes knit together, and centaur sages often coordinate defensive efforts.

The centaur contribution to the northern economy is mostly in the form of trading and hunting. Centaur caravans carry a surprising amount of goods between the tribes.

The Nomad Lands

Megalans refer to the region north of the Whitehood Mountains as a land where huge hairy men and animals devour each other indiscriminately. As usual with civilized peoples' views of their less sophisticated neighbors, this is slightly over-simplified – but, in this case, only slightly.

The region's inhabitants are primitive (TL2), but tough; the climate does not permit them to be anything else. The common name for the area is deceptive; some of its people are more or less nomadic, but others, possibly the majority, are not. Despite their lack of unity, they take pride in their unique identity, and quickly ally against invaders. Furthermore, the local terrain is inhospitable to large armies. Hence, the Nomad Lands have resisted every Megalan attempt at conquest. The official Megalan position now is that there is simply nothing in the Northlands worth conquering, which is true . . . but by itself, that would not stop Megalos. The Northmen, meanwhile, consider raiding Megalos to be fine sport.

The people of Sahud variously refer to the Northmen as typical foreigners, subhuman beasts, or an interesting demonstration of certain philosophical principles. It probably depends on who you ask, what the Northmen have been doing lately, and what the Sahudese wants you to think.

Substantially less nomadic than their inland neighbors, coastal tribes build single-masted "dragon-ships" in which they hunt whales and raid Megalos or Sahud. They are excellent sailors, and their ships are solidly built, though not as technically advanced as those of Araterre.

Geography

The southern part of the Nomad Lands is hilly, sloping downward to the northern plains. Much of the region is covered with pine forests; the

rest is grassland, crossed by many rivers and finger-like glacial lakes. The land suffers from warped mana, varying from low to high abruptly and without visible signs; it is even possible for the mana in a single area to change in the space of a week or two. This has caused many strange effects in the inhabitants, and makes spell-casting a dangerous enterprise; see *Managing Mana Shifts,* p. 24. Were-creatures are common, along with many other strange beasts of legend – gryphons, pegasi, hippogriffs, and so forth (see pp. 219-226). Even normal animals grow larger and fiercer: beaver, mink, elk, wolves, bears, and even nightstalkers (p. 223) reach incredible proportions. Northmen hunt these for food and hides; the finest pelts on Yrth come from this land.

Apart from small fields of wheat and barley, used for making bread and brewing beer, the Northmen have no real agriculture. Some tribes are pastoral, raising flocks of hardings and, occasionally, very tough sheep. Otherwise, they survive by hunting and fishing; some subsist purely as hunter-gatherers. They breed fine, strong ponies and horses; some of the best warhorses of civilized countries have a large dash of northern blood.

History

The humans who settled the harsh northern lands were almost all taken by the Banestorm from northern Eurasia. Celts, Scandinavians, and even a few Mongols mixed with folk of the same racial stock as that of Megalos. There is evidence that they came from parallel worlds which had reached different points in history; their cultures and religions have elements which were, at best, vanishingly rare by Earth's Middle Ages. Generations of outdoor life then bred a tough race with a patchwork culture.

Centuries ago, Megalos conquered much of the Nomad Lands. The stubborn Northmen retreated to the most remote areas. Eventually, however, they united under the legendary hero Ross Gatecracker, and drove the Megalans south of the mountains. Then they started raiding Megalos proper. The Emperor's Wall was built 400 years ago to stop raids to the west – so the Northmen raided east instead.

Trade and Raiding

Today, the coastal Northmen prosper from trade with the south, when they are not attacking it, and some are shrewd enough to think that they can make more profit from peace in the long run. They may even seek to discourage raiding by their cousins, to make trade easier – or they may run protection rackets on coastal towns. Inland, however, the barbarians still revel in battle, and cast covetous eyes on any riches which seem unguarded. For the last 15 years or so, their favorite target has been the Megalan city of Kethalos, which at one time appeared to have been abandoned by its warlord. Their first assault was driven off, and a new lord strengthened the defenses, but some of the chiefs now sense that the border is growing weak again, and are planning more raids to avenge that old defeat.

Mercenary Wanderers

Throughout history, individual Northmen have wandered south in search of profitable adventures, and some have happily taken up mercenary service – as well as crime and arena fighting. While military doctrine in both Megalos and Sahud is that these troops are more trouble than they are worth, they have their uses – typically, as disposable first-wave assault forces. While northern warriors may resent it if they notice that their commanders place *no* value on their lives, some take this as an opportunity for glory. It does little for their loyalty, however. As Northmen are actually no less intelligent than other humans, the smartest wanderers can sometimes acquire command positions, especially in mercenary bands. Some have become famous for bold tactics and pragmatic cunning.

The Legend of Heolford

400 years ago, the county of Heolford was the richest Megalan province north of the Whitehoods. It extended inland along the River Branduch for three score miles; its fields were rich and its cattle fat. Its lords grew rich from trade in furs, amber and horses, and used their wealth to construct a mammoth castle-town in the center of their territory.

When the Northmen overran the northern provinces, it was at Heolford castle that the Megalans made their last stand. After it became apparent that no hope remained, the defenders sallied forth to certain death. It is said that the women slew their children and then themselves, rather than suffer slavery or worse at the barbarians' hands. The few surviving wizards then conjured great magics. Fire consumed the bodies, the mages themselves, and any Northmen who had the misfortune to have scaled the walls. Earthquakes shattered the land, catching the hordes outside in landslides and great chasms. Afterward, only a burned-out shell remained in a devastated landscape.

The tale of Heolford was carried south by a handful of survivors, and became a favorite subject for minstrels all over Megalos. The lost gold of Heolford has become legendary: the castle's treasury is said to contain the wealth of a dozen counties. Some say that these riches were destroyed in the magical conflagration, while others maintain that the treasures of the castle were hidden away, to be recovered later. Only cynics mutter that these stories are vague and reek of optimism. The Northmen believe the ruin is haunted by the ghosts of the murdered children, and speak of it with fear.

The exact location of Heolford is known only to some Northmen. Many adventurers from the south have gone in search of it in lands much changed from the old maps, now riddled with small lakes, irregular ridges, and deep crevices. If any found it, they never returned to tell the tale.

Society

Most northern tribes and clans build small villages or hill forts, sometimes moving between sites at different times of the year as they follow their herds around their pastures. True nomads, with no building more permanent than a tent, are rarities, limited to the larger lowland plains.

Northmen will notoriously travel great distances to attack and loot another village or a Megalan town. When they are not raiding, warriors like to hunt monsters or continue old blood feuds – but much of the time, practicality keeps them tending herds or fishing.

The position of women varies tremendously from tribe to tribe. In some places, they are simply property; in others, they are equals, and courtship rites are elaborate and sometimes violent. Thanks to traditions dating back to the first, chaotic days of humanity on Yrth, a few clans are actually entirely female; male slaves are kept for breeding, and boy-babies are sold or given away as soon as they are weaned. In most tribes, though, monogamous marriage is the norm, and indeed, is actively encouraged; the Northmen need a good birthrate to keep their population stable.

Some tribes keep slaves. These are most often women captured in raids, although male prisoners of war are occasionally kept as well. In other cases, defeated foes may be ransomed, or forced to swear oaths of subservience. These are taken very seriously, although subservient tribes are always looking for ways to escape this condition.

Social Position

Each Nomad Lands clan or tribe is ruled by a chieftain or jarl (Status 4). The only occupations considered honorable for men are warrior or sailor (Status 1), shaman (Status 3), and skald (Status 2, p. 171). Farming, trading, or practicing a craft are thought of as part-time jobs only, although in truth, many Northmen spend most of their time in such pursuits. Some clans afford smiths special respect (Status 2). Ships' captains are often Status 2; they are considered warriors against the savage ocean, even if they spend all of their time trading.

Unproven warriors and members of marginal clans who live by hunting small game and gathering are treated as Status 0, while a few outcasts and bondsmen have Status -1; actual slaves are Status -2. Married women mostly take the Status of their husbands, while children, including unmarried daughters, can be regarded as taking their father's Status, reduced by 1 if he is highly placed and their own worth is unproven. Children usually have Social Stigma (Minor), and in some tribes, women have Social Stigma (Valuable Property) – but in many others, they receive more respect, and may even be traditionally permitted to take up arms if they wish.

Nonhumans

There are a few isolated settlements of elves in the northern forests. The superstitious Northmen fear them greatly, and stay clear of their territories. The Northmen are quite friendly with the dwarves of the Whitehood Mountains, especially since they share a common enemy in Megalos. The humans trade amber, furs, grain and meat to the dwarves in exchange for weapons. Northmen believe that weapons of dwarven make possess special powers – civilized men think this is a clever ploy of the crafty dwarves.

There are also a number of giant communities scattered about the north. The Northmen respect the giants (it isn't hard to see that *they* are tough), and freely trade with them. Conversely, the Northmen are really the only humans that the giants trust even a little; they may be loud, but this does not worry giants excessively, and giants have grown accustomed to the solid, straightforward Northman sense of honor.

Other nonhumans are rarely seen; any who visit are usually treated as curiosities. The first thing many Northmen will want to do is fight them, probably just in a "friendly" brawl, to see how tough they are.

Northman Names

Systems of personal naming in the Nomad Lands are as diverse as the people themselves. It sometimes seems that every clan and family has its own rules. However, as a general rule, a child is given a single name, at birth, by its parents, and then adds the name of the clan, tribe, or honored bloodline, usually as a surname with a prefix such as O'- or Mac-, or a suffix such as -son or -dotir. A few tribes also give members "true names" at birth or adolescence, which are kept secret from all but close family. Over time, individuals almost always also acquire a series of nicknames, one of which may stick well enough to replace the clan-name in general use – especially if the individual becomes a culture hero who every tribe wants to think of as its own!

The origins of personal names and for that matter most clan names encompass every Earth culture which contributed to the Northman gene pool, and a few more things that someone once thought sounded good. Celtic names (including, yes, "Bran" and "Conan") are common, as are Scandinavian (such as "Erik" or "Ragnar"). Asian and Mongol names (such as "Oggodai" or "Caidu") are less common, but known.

"Noble" titles are rare, but chieftains may, for example, refer to themselves *only* by their clan-name, implying that they personify the clan. "Jarl" is fairly frequently used by coastal tribes. Outcasts and exiles lose their clan-name; it is replaced with some form such as "the Clanless" if anyone wishes to be formal. Foundlings and truly solitary individuals have to use the same form, which gives them no end of trouble. Visitors are usually known by their personal name and the name of the land or nation they come from (such as "John of Caithness" or "John Caithnessman"); this sometimes sounds vaguely insulting, but isn't necessarily meant to be – it is simply the Northmen's way of trying to fit a visitor into their way of thinking.

Magic

Nomad Land magic is primarily concerned with nature and the elements, divination, and battle. It is often highly ritualistic, as rituals tend to make spells more predictable. Healing magic is shunned as "unmanly" by most tribes. This may seem counter-productive, but magic is unstable enough in these lands that healing spells can be downright dangerous, and are unreliable enough that any community which comes to depend on them will suffer in the end. Magic which enhances innate fighting ability or resistance to pain, however, is appreciated; although many barbarians will overtly dismiss it as "cheating" or something which they *personally* do not need, they are at heart pragmatists, who see a battle-spell as comparable to a fine sword – something to help a warrior use his strength to best effect. Formal duels usually involve an agreement that no magic will be involved, which may be monitored by a shaman or mage; cheating with magic in a formal duel is grounds for outlawry at minimum.

Magic is fairly common in the Nomad Lands, but is not a well-developed art, due to its inherent unpredictability (see p. 168). Aside from shamans (see *Northman Religion*), there are some non-religious mages, usually referred to as "witches," "witch-men," "rune-carvers" and so on. Some of these are accepted and even respected within the tribes, especially if they aid it in war, being then regarded as a slightly strange sort of warrior – not *quite* as honorable as a swordsman, perhaps, but not to be insulted either (Status 1). Others are seen as crazy, dangerous, marginal figures, whom one consults quietly when all else fails (Status 0, often with several different Reputations). Most are careful not to trespass on the shamans' territory of intercession with the spirit world.

This sort of "secular" magic is taught to apprentices who show signs of talent or dedication, largely by rote; Northmen mages are often illiterate, although they are not stupid, and the chancy system of training and tradition means that they tend to have rather limited selections of spells, albeit sometimes at high skill levels. However, because they usually have few rivals locally, "witch-folk," like shamans, often wield influence out of proportion to their skill.

Foreign mages in these lands will usually be regarded with suspicion, masked by a show of disdain, and a certain amount of curiosity. Northmen appreciate a good show, so displays of weak but flashy magic may earn the wielder hospitality as an entertainer. Some witch-folk will be eager to learn from visiting adepts; others will regard them with suspicion, and may try to do away with these "rivals." Shamans display similar attitudes, as they often suspect such foreigners of dubious attitudes to the spirits; if a shaman becomes seriously hostile, he may rouse the whole tribe against the interlopers.

Thanks to these same local magical instabilities, natural shape-changing powers are common among the Northmen; in fact, there are whole clans and even tribes of werefolk (p. 200). However, these are regarded with superstitious distrust by other Northmen, and tend to live in especially remote areas.

Northman Religion

Most Northmen are a relaxed sort of pagan (see p. 76). They will cheerfully acknowledge that God (or Allah) probably exists, while refusing to see any inconsistency between religions. ("Sure, God's real. All gods are real. Thor's real. Water-spirits – very real – my brother met one last year. What's the bother?") Religious practices vary tremendously from tribe to tribe, but the glorification of courage and battle-prowess is near-universal.

Most believe that each man has a *wyrd*, or destiny – totally unknown to him, and wholly inescapable. This gives warriors reckless courage. They also see themselves as surrounded by active spirits (see p. 8) and minor deities at all times. They believe that all of nature – the trees, sky, hills, rocks, streams, ponds, etc. – is inhabited by spirits, who have as many names as there are tribes. This may have some basis in practical fact on Ytarria, though the Nomad Lands seem to have fewer active spirits than Sahud (see p. 151).

Some tribes have a distinctly dark aspect to their religion. For example, in some, aging chieftains are ritually poisoned by a priest, who then foretells the clan's future by observing the dying leader's convulsions. A few are even more prone to human sacrifice. However, most Northmen doubt that the spirits are as greedy and hungry as that, or simply observe that nature takes its share of human lives without any help, and the "dark tribes" are usually shunned. Still, in the event of a war, most Northmen would rather have these tribes on their own side than fight them.

Shamans

The majority of tribal religious leaders are known as "shamans," or "druids" in more Celtic-influenced tribes; these are usually male, but some tribes have strong female priesthoods, often credited with prophetic powers. The shamans' primary task is to handle the relationship between humanity and the supernatural. They make sacrifices, read omens, conduct marriages (asking the spirits to bless the couple) and burials (sending the ghosts of the dead on to the afterlife), and bless warriors going into battle. More practically, most wield some kind of magic.

Virtually all supernatural powers are seen by Northmen as indicating contact with the spirit world, so any young person displaying signs of talent – or for that matter, specific mental "illnesses" – may be adopted by a shaman and trained as a successor. Most can cast at least a few spells having to do with nature, the weather, and the elements, but there are shamans both with stranger abilities and with no talent beyond a glib tongue and knowledge of rituals.

Law

Law among the Northmen is a matter of custom rather than decree. The traditions and taboos of a given tribe apply to everyone, even the chieftain. Judgments are usually made by the chieftain or priest after consulting with the older warriors; sometimes, priests have absolute authority. Punishments are either very light or very harsh – humiliation or forfeiture of property for slight offenses; death, exile or slavery for serious ones.

Only crimes seen as affecting the clan as a whole are generally brought before the chieftain. Individual disputes may be settled by duels, though these don't necessarily involve the loser dying. Otherwise, respected figures may be asked to arbitrate; their judgments often involve the payment of financial compensation , known as "blood price" if the offence was violent. Women are usually represented by their nearest male relative, although in some tribes they may fight for themselves – against other women, or even against men.

Skalds

Although writing among the Northmen is limited to runes carved on stone and wood, there is an entire class of oral historians and storytellers known as *skalds*. These are skilled musicians and performers who memorize the ballads, genealogies, fables, and histories of their clans, and compose new tales and songs celebrating the feats of great warriors and leaders. Some move from clan to clan, gathering and telling tales of far-off places. As they become known as skalds, they often acquire some kind of Claim to Hospitality.

A skald should have *at least* skill 12+ in Public Speaking and a couple of musical skills; the Eidetic Memory advantage is both appropriate and enormously useful. A few have the Enthrallment skill or know a little subtle magic.

Skalds have an almost sacred standing in the Nomad Lands – he who slays a skald, except in self-defense, is said to have ill luck for seven lifetimes. This can be treated as a form of Legal Immunity ("Skaldic Immunity"), worth 10 points, though there is not necessarily a formal penalty for harming a skald; the bad luck (and, more practically, the extremely bad associated Reputation) is often considered punishment enough.

Adventuring in the Nomad Lands

This is a harsh country, full of ancient rivalries, huge beasts, and strange magics. While few "civilized" folk except fur traders have reason to come here, those looking for excitement, or just plain trouble, will find as much as they can handle.

Northmen are hearty and loud, but not fools. They often find high technology interesting – especially if it produces better ships or weapons – and assess magic in terms of whether it may offend the spirits, how much practical use it is, and how one should go about slaying the wizard if necessary. Their respect and comradeship is reserved for those like themselves – tough, brave, irresponsible fighters.

Diplomatic dealings with the tribes require a judicious combination of gifts, threats, flattery, and sometimes single combat. Northmen typically react at -3 or worse to anyone they deem weak or cowardly, and +2 or better to anyone displaying unusual bravery or honor. Berserkers are respected but not especially feared.

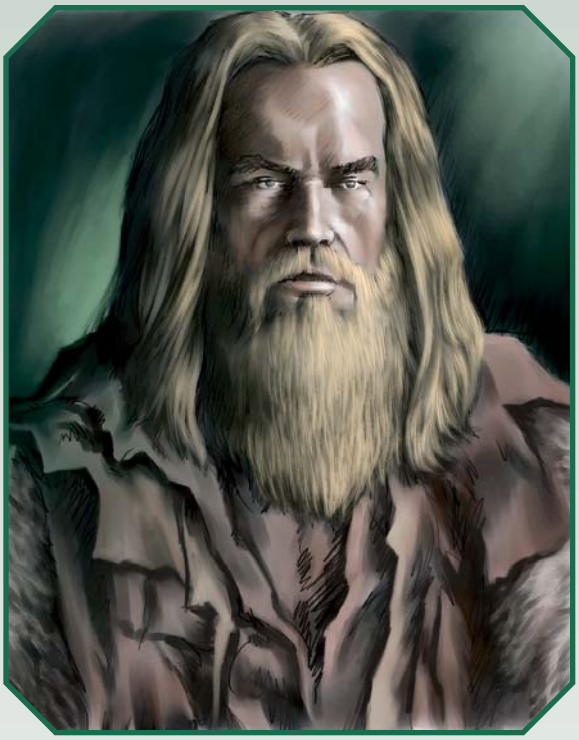
Beast-Hunting: The fur trade gives monster-slaying expeditions a direct profit motive. However, many furs come from large, dangerous animals, and any party must deal with Northmen as well – especially if the adventurers trespass on tribal hunting grounds. Don't forget that some clans of the Nomad Lands are weres; accidentally slaying a chief's son could get PCs in all sorts of hot water.

Treasure-Hunting: The ruined towers of several Megalan fiefdoms now lie within Northman territory, such as Heolford (p. 168). A band of adventurers might find worthwhile loot, lost or abandoned in the final flight. Who knows . . . there might even be hastily-drawn maps, two centuries old, to guide such a search.

Going Home: The Nomad Lands is also a great place for adventurers to *come from*. A land of tough warriors who glory in battle invariably exports a few every year. Occasionally, some return home to settle old scores, redeem some disgrace, assist their clan, or just show off their loot.

Blind Lars (313 points)

Blind Lars is one of the most famous wanderers in all Ytarria. He began traveling at age 14, and has never stopped in the 40 years since. He rarely stays in one spot for long, though he did remain in Sahud for two different two-year periods that he refuses to talk about. He will take the road alone if need be, but prefers to travel with any group that will accept his company. Few refuse.



Although slighter of build than some Northmen (at 6' 2" tall, he weighs just 190 lbs.), Lars is obviously from the Nomad Lands, with blond hair and blue eyes. He still returns there regularly to pass along the latest news from the outside world and pick up clan gossip. Blind from birth, his only concession to the fact is that he avoids traveling alone when at all possible. This isn't to say that he's helpless if stranded – between his uncanny sense of direction and his skills, he is quite capable of fending for himself. He is also familiar with much of Yrth, including both its people and its technology. He never has learned to read or write, though.

Lars has lost some strength and vigor in recent years; he might someday admit the fact to himself and think about settling down. However, immobility will chafe him badly. He may resolve the problem by finding one or more "heirs," teaching them some of his skills, and then sending them out to spread his tales and return to him periodically with new stories.

Note: Lars' Status and Wealth are strictly theoretical; he doesn't worry much about money, and never has much difficulty living as suits himself. He has buried or hidden pots of money all over Ytarria "in case he needs them later."

ST 10 [0]; **DX** 13 [60]; **IQ** 14 [80]; **HT** 10 [0].
Damage 1d-2/1d; BL 20 lbs.; HP 10 [0]; Will 14 [0]; Per 14 [0]; FP 12 [6].
Basic Speed 6.00 [5]; Basic Move 6 [0]; Dodge 5*; Parry 6* (Judo).

Social Background

TL: 3 [0].

CF: Nomad Lands [0]; Christian region [1]; Dwarves [1]; Elves [1]; Sahud [1].

Languages: Northland (Native/None) [-3]; Anglish (Native/None) [3]; Dwarvish (Accented/None) [2]; Elvish (Accented/None) [2]; Sahudese (Accented/None) [2].

Advantages

Absolute Direction [5]; Acute Hearing +3 [6]; Animal Empathy [5]; Claim to Hospitality (all Northmen) [10]; Eidetic Memory [5]; Fit [5]; Handsome [12]; Legal Immunity ("Skaldic Immunity" (p. 171)) [10]; Musical Ability +3 [15]; Reputation +2 (As a great entertainer; Almost everyone; All the time) [10]; Status 2 (Skald) [10]; Voice [10]; Wealth (Wealthy) [20].

Disadvantages

Blindness [-50].

Quirks: Gets angry if anyone tries to treat him as handicapped; Lives extremely simply – gives away or buries any money he acquires beyond basic needs; Pretends that he isn't blind; Wanderlust. [-4]

Skills

Animal Handling (Equines)-15 (IQ+1) [4]; Area Knowledge (Megalos)-14 (IQ+0) [1]; Area Knowledge (Nomad Lands)-15 (IQ+1) [2]; Area Knowledge (Sahud)-14 (IQ+0) [1]; Carousing-13 (HT+3) [8]; Current Affairs/TL3 (Megalos)-14 (IQ+0) [1]; Current Affairs/TL3 (Nomad Lands)-16 (IQ+2) [4]; Fast Talk-15† (IQ+1) [1]; First Aid-15 (IQ+1) [2]; Hiking-12 (HT+2) [8]; History (Modern Megalos)-12 (IQ-2) [1]; History (Nomad Lands)-13 (IQ-1) [2]; Judo-7* (DX-6) [4]; Musical Instrument (Flute)-16‡ (IQ+2) [2]; Musical Instrument (Harp)-16‡ (IQ+2) [2]; Poetry-13 (IQ-1) [1]; Psychology (Human)-12 (IQ-2) [1]; Public Speaking-20† (IQ+6) [16]; Riding (Horse)-15 (DX+2) [7]; Savoir-Faire (High Society)-16 (IQ+2) [4]; Singing-16§ (HT+6) [2]; Streetwise-13 (IQ-1) [1]; Survival (Woodlands)-15 (Per+1) [4]; Swimming-12 (HT+2) [4].

* Dodge is -4, Combat Skills are -6 for Blindness.

† +2 from Voice.

‡ +3 from Musical Ability.

§ +2 from Voice *and* +3 from Musical Ability.

The Southwestern Wilderness

To most inhabitants of Ytarria – even to the people of Caithness and al-Haz – the southwestern part of the continent is a land of sinister mystery. Hazis tell each other of a land ruled by "djinn," powerful, amoral spirits whose nearly-limitless magical powers give them the power of life and death over anyone in their domains. More sophisticated folk smile at those stories, saying the so-called "djinn" are simply powerful wizards who live in fortified towers, ruling over scattered patches of arable land which supply them with enough to survive while they pursue their eccentric studies. But even the djinn – whatever they are – only control part of this land; much is sheer wilderness, unmapped and unknown.

The Great Desert

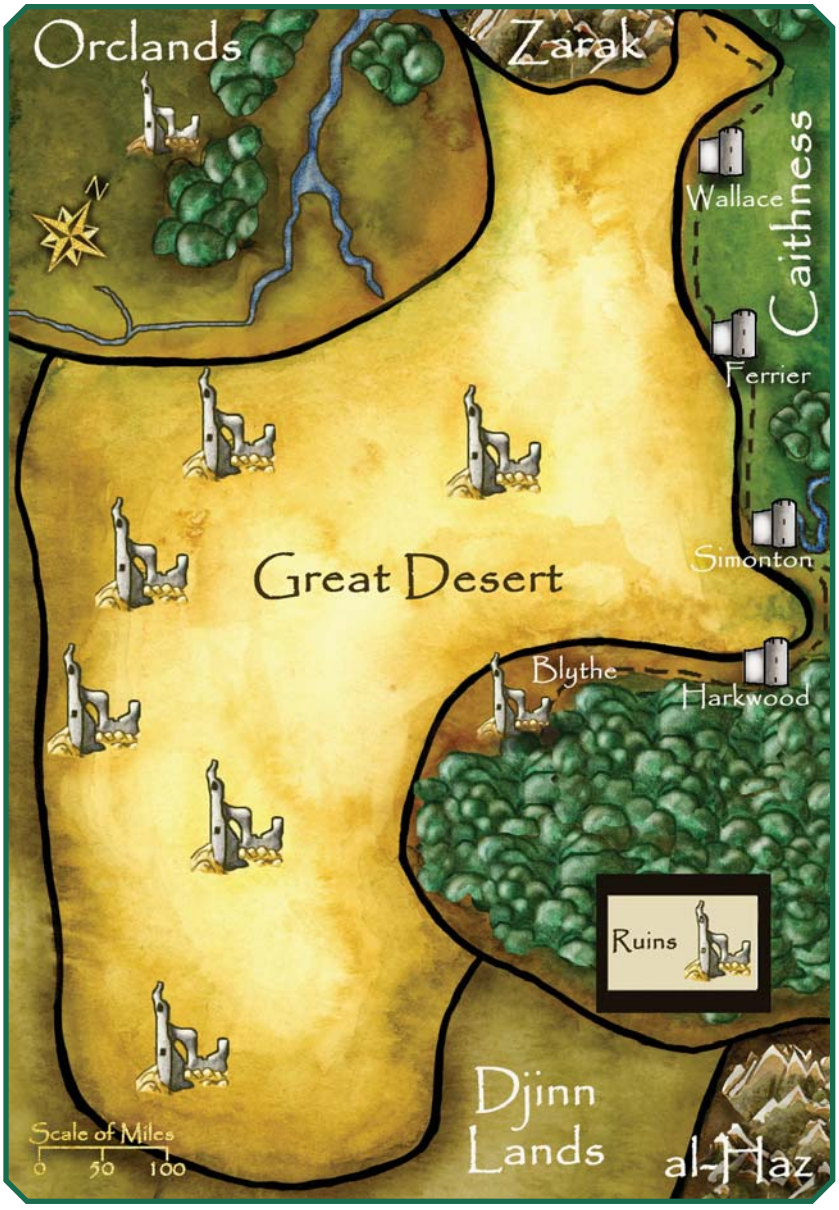
The Great Desert, west of Caithness, is barren indeed – with no mana, no water, and very little life. It seems to be retreating, year by year, but slowly at best. Only older elves and well-informed of scholars are likely to realize it, but in fact, the desert was one product of the great Bane. Something even worse than the Banestorm, but fortunately only temporary, scoured the whole region of life, moisture, and mana. It was once heavily forested, and home to many elves.

Dead and ancient cities, built by unknown but *almost* certainly elvish hands, can be found within this desert – sometimes. The shifting sand covers and uncovers them, as if at whim. Now, the only known inhabitants of the desert are small tribes of reptile men, who revel in the heat and isolation. These fierce wanderers will prey on any travelers they can catch. When there are no travelers about, they subsist on lizards, insects, and other small game. They have no interest in the old cities, save to hunt what shelters there.

The Southern Plains

The location of the southwestern border of al-Haz is officially a secret of the state, as is what lies beyond. In truth, the boundary is vague. Some foreign merchants believe valuable trade is to be found there. Occasional caravans from Caithness and ships from Cardiel have managed to pass the barriers of geography and Hazi guards to meet with Muslim tribes.

These nomadic "sons of the plain" are ruled only by their own sheikhs, not by the pashas of al-Haz, whatever the Hazis may say . . . though every now and again a Hazi army wastes energy and men attempting to exert authority over the plains. The tribesmen will trade ivory, jewels, fine glassware, and great chunks of raw copper with anyone who offers a fair price,



Elven Ruins

Strewn throughout Ytarria are ruins of ancient elvish communities. Those in the Great Desert are actually far from unique – but they are not protected by current elvish occupation, and the hot, dry climate serves to preserve what elsewhere would be destroyed by rain and frost, covered by vegetation, or torn up by humans in need of farmland and materials for their own buildings. Most other surviving, substantial elf-ruins are in similarly harsh or uninhabitable areas.

The fact is, elves once lived in great numbers throughout the continent, and many of their communities were much larger than those of today. The Banestorm destroyed a great deal of elven society, but the withdrawal from urban living had begun *long* before that. Although it is not much recorded in elven ballads or epics, some elves know of this process; they consider that their ancestors found a better way to live, and would regard suggestions that it was a failure or regression with incomprehension.

Elven ruins are never easy to locate; these buildings were always *meant* to blend into the surrounding terrain. They will usually be above ground, and since elves have never used money, and did not often trade with the dwarves, searchers will not find large treasure rooms or great armories. However, the elves were magical and literate, and libraries of arcane lore *do* very occasionally turn up in their ruins. From texts to scrolls to magical items, elven wizards were quite prolific. The elves also wrought fine jewelry.

Modern elves do not systematically protect their ancient ruins, and will regard *most* items plundered from such sites with casual curiosity. However, some of them classify some sites as tombs or memorials to be left undisturbed, and some ancient lore as too dangerous to resurrect.

but will not permit the traders to go deeper into their lands. They tell of the "djinn" who rule the interior; many visitors who listen to their stories come to believe that the djinn are actually demons.

The plains are low-mana, with some patches of no mana, and a few of normal mana. Most of the normal-mana areas coincide with the small oases which help support the tribes. Helpful mages who inhabit these areas are honored; occasionally, one tries to uses his powers to coerce the tribesmen. This error is always fatal.

The Djinn Lands

The most knowledgeable merchants and wizards know that a few travelers have evaded the plains tribesmen and entered the "Lands of the Djinn"; fewer have returned. Their accounts say that the region is much like the Southern Plains, but with slightly more varied geography; within the vast, dry, open country are many substantial oases, deep wadis, isolated mountain ranges, and small salt lakes.

As for the "djinn" – they are, it is reported, actually powerful human mages, each with his own castle in a small high-mana area. They mostly follow Islam, after a fashion, and war among themselves constantly. The tribesmen serve them as buffers against the rest of the world, and occasionally as mercenaries. Little else is known; the source of the copper, in particular, is a mystery.

Legends of evil spirits aside, the general Hazi view of the djinn is that they are merely godless wizards. But then, people are often ignorant. The fact is, the djinn are unique.

The Creation of the Djinn

The true nature of the "djinn" can only be explained if one knows something of Yrth's ancient history. However, very few beings – apart from the djinn themselves, some of their most trusted retainers, and a few elves – know enough.

The elves like to think of themselves as always having lived in a bucolic utopia, interrupted only by the crass behavior of other races. The fact is, though, that their long history has its share of strange interludes, with some elves pursuing their own peculiar ideas.

Thousands of years ago, one such group – a school of elven wizards, who had spent centuries delving deep into the mystical aspects of magical theory – felt that they had discovered enough to move on from the chains of flesh and matter. They did not dream of becoming *gods*, exactly, if only because their religion had no real conception of deities with mortal motivations, but they did expect to become wiser and more powerful, and shed many of the limits of their bodies.

These elven archmages developed a theoretical technique by which they could become *different*. The word they used might translate as "enlightened," or perhaps more accurately as "ascended." The process – essentially a ritual spell – would involve a great deal of time and effort, and some risk. It would certainly draw most of the mana out of a broad area for a good few years, which was not something that most elves would consider acceptable. However, the archmages decided that the potential benefits were worth the cost.

None of them were fools, and they realized that others of their race might seek to stop them. So they departed their homes and traveled to the hot far southwest, where they would be unlikely to be interrupted, and where draining a lot of mana would cause less harm to the balance of nature. They scattered, found secure sites where they could work uninterrupted, and then linked their powers magically across miles of wilderness. After years of preparation and meditation, they spent weeks working their ritual.

Perhaps they simply miscalculated, or perhaps too many of them were interrupted by passing wildlife at just the wrong moment. Actually, their efforts were largely successful. They did indeed become immaterial beings with great mental powers – but also with limitations.

Djinn look like very powerful human wizards to human observers, especially as they often choose not to explain their true nature, but this is deceptive.

The problem was that they were still mystically linked to their old bodies, and could not leave them behind for long. Those bodies, held in a kind of magical stasis, act as a channel to feed mana from the local field into the spirit-being. They cannot even be moved without danger – the body would likely crumble to dust, and the spirit would cease to exist. Furthermore, the spirits' powers proved less than expected; they cannot extend their influence very far, and are limited in what effect they can have on the material world – unless they can find another, living, intelligent "conduit" through which to exert their influence.

Those anchoring bodies thus remained where the elven mages had sat, under carefully assembled magical and physical protections. Other elves, having sensed something of the original working and found out a little more by scrying, avoided the whole region out of superstitious dread. The very few who came this way regardless refused the spirits' psychic offers with a shiver of disgust, as did any dwarves who heard them . . . and no being who was once an elf, however desperate, would ever seek any kind of alliance with an orc. Thus, the "ascended" beings could do little but contemplate their state and meditate on the secrets of magic.

See p. 188 for a template for Ascended One characters.

Humans as Vessels

Then came the Banestorm, and a few years later, intelligent beings who *would* consider the spirits' offer of power wandered into the southwestern wilderness. To the spirits, humans were, if unattractive, not actually foul. Those first travelers, Muslim tribesmen from what would become al-Haz, named the spirits after the nearest thing in their legends: *djinn*.

Each spirit found a suitable partner for use as its vessel and channel for its power. They were delighted by this; while they were capable of pursuing abstract thought and of creating intangible effects which had mostly kept them interested, they had still become desperately bored over the millennia. Now, at last, they could operate in the physical world again. For their part, their human partners were happy to accept offers of power and near immortality – although they perhaps did not understand *quite* what they were accepting.

These are symbiotic relationships, in which both participants become part of a greater whole, while retaining some individuality. The "Ascended One" has far greater power and longer memories; the human contributes a body whose functions and instincts often govern the unified being's actions. The former can teach the latter a great deal about magic, but the sheer power of the symbiosis comes from the supernatural "second soul." The immaterial being can separate itself physically from the human if necessary, although it retains a psychic link, but they are more powerful together. Djinn *look* like very powerful human wizards to human observers, especially as they often choose not to explain their true nature, but this is deceptive.

Many djinn – or at least, the human halves of the symbiosis – are practicing Muslims of a sort, if only out of habits dating back to their mortal days. The Ascended Ones have varying attitudes to this, but mostly tolerate it; some have become interested in the subject and more or less converted, while others, deciding that the whole thing is human foolishness, have sought to dissuade their mortal vessels from these beliefs. Some mortals have held out against this, but it is hard to resist psychological pressures from a being which can read one's every thought and feeling. The humans very occasionally make the *hajj* pilgrimage incognito, although the djinn regard this as a frightening risk.

Effects on Mana Levels

As mages, Ascended Ones naturally regard mana as a valuable resource. Unfortunately, their "ascensions" killed a lot of the area's natural magic. The typical mana level of the Djinn Lands is normal, although fairly large low-mana swathes and small spots with high mana exist as well. But the spells the djinn worked drained the areas around their old bodies down to low mana – and now the Ascended Ones are largely trapped in tombs of their own making. Theoretically, their magical powers are immense; in practice, they're fairly limited.

In truth, the djinns' preserved bodies act as "mana sinks," drawing off ambient magical energies to support the Ascended Ones; if a body is destroyed, the surrounding area will revert to its original mana level over the next few years. The djinn guard this secret carefully; to them, murdering each other to gain more mana would amount to cannibalism – which is below even their rather amoral standards.

The appeal of a human vessel here is particularly clear: djinn can use such a being to locate and take control of nearby high-mana areas. The Ascended One still has to return to its body periodically, but the vessel or its servants can remain on guard. Djinn sometimes fight wars for control of high-mana areas, although these days they operate under a web of treaties, agreements, and unwritten rules.

Of course, anyone who knows the truth will realize a djinni castle in a high mana area will have a nearby low mana area with a terribly fragile body at its heart, while a djinni with a fortress in a low mana area will probably have a well-guarded secret in the cellar. All djinn are torn between the urge to protect these bodies and the wish to keep them secret; most use extensive magical defenses and a few traps.

Retinues

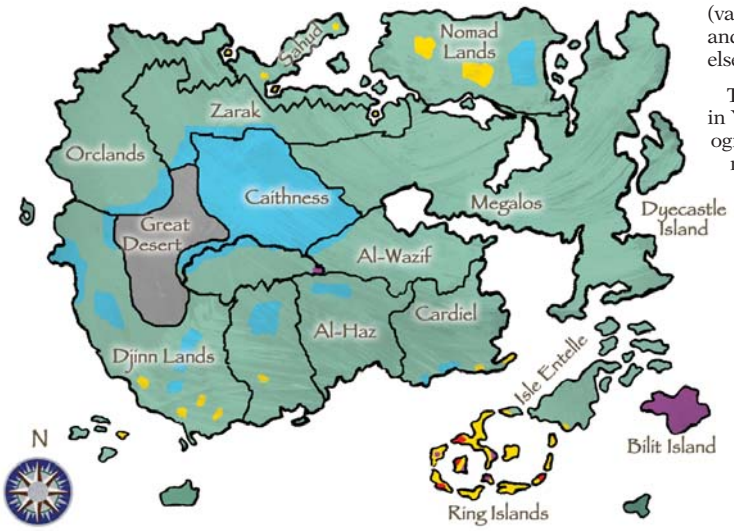
Having regained full contact with the physical world, the djinn decided they needed mortal servants. They could, perhaps, keep their vessels alive and comfortable by magic, but it's easier to employ other humans to handle trivia, while human company, and the various pleasures of the flesh, have their own amusement value. Their first servants were recruited from among the desert tribes or curious visitors; secret missions to other lands then found more, including specialists in various skills. Today, most members of the small communities which cluster around the djinn castles are the descendants of those first recruits, although entertainers, champions, and craftsmen are still occasionally recruited from all across Ytarria by enigmatic, well-funded travelers who only tell them where they are to travel when they have been sworn to secrecy.

Djinn servants are in essentially feudal relationships with these rulers, giving service in exchange for protection and security. Most are happy with this, and not just because they are brought up with the idea; the djinn are intelligent enough to understand that comfortable humans make the best servants, and it is little more trouble for them to be generous and fair rulers than it would be for them to govern with cruelty. Still, there is absolutely no doubt in anyone's mind who is in charge.

Also, the djinn do have a tendency to treat their servants as pawns. They are valuable, useful pawns, to be sure, and the more empathetic human halves to the relationships can seek to behave in a more ethical way, but plenty of servants have been sent on dangerous missions for trivial reasons, or required to fight and die in wars to prove a minor point. Most accept this as their fate in life, but some are capable of resentment and even rebellion. A few see the djinn as gods, beyond question or comprehension, but ironically, the djinn generally discourage this; whether they are Muslims or devotees of the Eternal, most retain certain ethics.

Occasionally, djinn become parents to human children. Most are notable only for having some level of Magery; a few possess minor magical Unnatural Features. These too usually become members of the djinni's household – often privileged, occasionally savagely tested – although some have chosen to wander the

Mana Levels Across Ytarria



Most of Ytarria has normal mana, with the exception of Caithness (low mana), the Great Desert (no mana), Bilit Island (variable), and the Ring Islands (mostly high, with very high and variable spots). Large spots of high and low mana are found elsewhere, as shown.

This map has more information than (probably) any one person in Ytarria would possess, but the wizards in each area would recognize it as correct for their area. The GM, of course, is free to make changes, or to have very authoritative NPC advisers disagree with the information here as it relates to distant lands.

Only major features are shown. The yellow dots representing the high-mana spots in Sahud are exaggerated to make them visible, as is the purple dot representing Authiel in the Great Forest. There are many, many small areas across the continent where the mana varies from the prevailing level, such as the spots around djinn castles (p. 176); the GM may create these to fit the campaign.

For clarity, only land areas are colored. Lakes and coastal oceans generally have the mana level of the adjacent land; the mana level over the deep oceans is mostly low, with some areas of no mana and some of changeable mana.
See p. 178.

world for a while or forever, or have been expelled. However, the difficulties that such relationships can produce cause many djinn to use magical contraception.

Djinn Contests

Contrary to some reports, the djinn are not *always* at war with each other. However, each of them combines a streak of solipsism, elven arrogance, and millennia of pent-up boredom, with whatever foibles and tastes they inherit from the human sides of the partnerships. Furthermore, they are often in competition for limited magical resources. They may resolve conflicts, including many minor personal grudges, by fighting wars, which they treat much like games.

Although relationships between the djinn themselves are formal, even ritualistic, the rules and conventions involved do not extend to the detailed conduct of their servants. The petty wars of the djinn can be bloody; while the warriors might accept surrenders and obey certain rules, their orders might be to "destroy all of the enemy" or "take this position at any cost." Occasionally, though, the djinn will remember that their servants feel pain and fear, and act with whimsical compassion.

Moreover, two djinn may sometimes decide to settle their differences more politely, with less risk to valuable servants. This often involves some kind of formal contest, perhaps between hand-picked champions. Some conflicts have even been resolved by athletic competitions, or contests of some other skill – or have been placed before human judges, whether famous legal scholars or randomly-chosen passers-by. The djinn involved usually swear that neither of them will seek revenge from the judge for any decision – but they sometimes forget to specify this, and anyway, their oaths are only as binding as those of mortals.

Adventuring in the Wilderness

PCs in the southwestern wilderness need to be well-prepared and well-equipped; they'll have to face heat, no local water, human or reptile-man tribes, the occasional monster, and maybe the terrifying djinn. Still, the rewards may justify the effort. There are ruins to explore, hoards to plunder, monsters to harvest mana organs from, tribal trade to negotiate – and djinn resources to extort. That last includes copper but mostly involves magic in various forms.

Employment by a djinni, whether short-term or long-term, can be immensely profitable – if one survives. A great fighter hired to champion one of the mages will be well-paid, but he'll have to face an equally daunting opponent, and the exact terms of the contest may not be decided until the last moment. Craftsmen hired to build a new palace may theoretically have an easier time of it – but the journey to and from the location will be arduous. Rival djinn or jealous fellow servants may interfere, and unexpected magical strangeness is always a threat.

Trying to approach a djinni on an *equal* level is usually considered a one-way ticket to atomization. Luckily, most of these mages will respond to this attitude with amusement rather than anger – at first. Given their age, advanced magic, and inarguable power, djinn tend to treat adventurers as little more than hirelings. Convincing one to deal with a party as allies or business partners will be difficult at best. As for fighting one . . . with their power, numerous servants and guards, and intangible, supernatural presence – well, if you really have a reason, good luck.

Djinn Emissaries

Those who know anything about the djinn think of them as wrapped up in their own concerns and private rivalries, taking very little interest in the world beyond their domains. This is partly true, and partly a sign that the

On Becoming a Djinni

Ascended Ones do not generally change their vessels. The effort of finding and bonding to a human is considerable, and it always seems easier to work with the current individual than to find a new one. However, very occasionally, through hostile action or mischance, a vessel may die, go totally insane, or somehow (for reasons no Ascended One would ever be able to understand) manage to break the relationship. Then, the Ascended One will seek a replacement.

In game terms, he has to acquire a new Ally/Puppet with a Mindlink. If the Ascended One was being played as a PC, some of the required points might be carried over from a previous Ally who died through no fault of the Ascended One; also, a new vessel might be treated as a Dependent as well as an Ally, reducing the cost for as long as the Ascended One needs to train and protect him.

In game-world terms, the Ascended One must find a human who appears healthy and magically talented, and then persuade him or her to accept the relationship. An Ascended One might be able to establish a link with an unwilling subject, but this would require a lot of effort, and seems pointless given the risk of the human going insane or committing suicide. The bonding process (use of the Ascended One's Affliction power) is a lengthy ritual; note that the potential vessel will rarely choose to resist. If it succeeds, a PC Ascended One should spend the necessary character points at this point. The initial Affliction effect is temporary, but the Ascended One can use its Chronic Possession ability to transform the vessel into a Puppet, making the disadvantage permanent.

Human PCs who learn the secret of the djinn and seek to become the human half of a partnership have adopted a *very* major project; new vessels are only required by any of the djinn a couple of times or so per century, and they are certainly unlikely to be offered the chance if they murdered a previous vessel! Also, many other humans are likely to regard the idea as proof that the PC has gone insane, and any Ascended One is an non-player character, under the control of the GM, with priorities and objectives of its own.

occasional missions sent out from the Djinn Lands have been good at preserving secrecy.

Djinn do sometimes take an interest in other lands as more than a source of servants and entertainers. In particular, their desire to escape their limitations could lead them to seek out other wizards, especially elves – even dark elves – and magical texts or powerful devices. Sometimes they dispatch secret parties of emissaries or theives beyond their borders, though they are unlikely to send their own vessels – they value their connection to the physical world too much.

The djinn usually pay agents, guides, and brokers well but expect good service in return. They might well keep even their most important servants in ignorance of their true nature and intentions. PCs taking such jobs could soon find themselves caught in a maze of high magic, subtle deception, and ancient rivalries.

The Oceans

The oceans around Ytarria hold whole civilizations, physically and socially adapted to this very different world.

The Ocean Environment

Much like the land masses of Earth, Ytarria is surrounded by a continental shelf, above which the waters are never more than a few hundred feet deep, and often much shallower. On a clear day, sunlight can penetrate all the way down, although deeper parts are in a murky twilight at best. These waters are tolerably warm in summer but can become dangerously cold for humans in winter and spring.

Yrth has many kinds of marine life, from fish and crabs undersea predators of alarming size. Many species of corals thrive, and there are substantial reefs in the waters around Araterre. The coral reefs around the Ring Islands (p. 107) are *very* strange, full of creatures with supernatural powers. Beautiful and naturally enchanted shells from those reefs bring high prices in Megalos and Sahud.

The continental shelf extends about a hundred miles from the coast of Ytarria – less in some places, slightly more in others – and then plummets away to the dark abyssal plains, thousands of feet deep. The dropoff may be a steep, rocky slope, or a vertical cliff. The ocean deeps are much more desert-like; many creatures live down there, but some have to rise to shallower waters to feed. However, there are some utterly bizarre creatures in Yrth's deep oceans, possibly making use of local magical energies or other unknown sources of food.

The continental shelf has a range of mana levels, mostly between low and high. The abyssal plains are mostly low mana, with substantial tracts of *no* mana and some areas of active instability. There are legends of normal or even high-mana sites on the deep ocean floor, inhabited by strange races.

Adventures Beneath the Waves

Underwater operations are notoriously difficult and dangerous for surface-dwellers. Yrth technology on its own does not permit even *attempts* at submarine exploration by humans apart from crude diving

Island Cultures

There are a number of small to medium-sized islands near Ytarria. Most of those close to the mainland are possessions of the nearest major power, with perhaps a small fishing village or two. The larger outlying islands are either uninhabited or effectively independent, if only because they're too much trouble to conquer. Most of the inhabited ones have small, scattered communities, usually human. Living by farming and fishing, they are rarely above TL1 and are often TL0. They rarely have governments beyond a village headman, and their cultures are often an eclectic mix with multiple origins. Some have working relationships with sea elves or merfolk.

In the last few centuries, pseudo-Vikings from the Nomad Lands have colonized nearby islands, which sometimes serve as forward bases for raiders. As a result, the navies of Megalos and Sahud occasionally put on a show of force to suppress the "pirate havens." Elsewhere, some of the islands southwest of the Djinn Lands are home to a variety of weird creatures and a few eccentric human mages who claim some kind of association with the djinn. These are suitable locations for high fantasy "Sinbad"-style adventures.

bells occasionally employed for simple salvage work; however, magical or racial powers may help. The rules which follow are somewhat abstracted; GMs who want to run grittily realistic games of sub-aquatic exploration can find plenty with which to worry their players in any good book on diving.

In addition to the ability to breathe water (Doesn't Breathe, usually with the Gills or Oxygen Storage limitations) and either Aquatic or Amphibious, underwater creatures require Pressure Support. For simplicity, GMs may assume that Pressure Support 1 is enough for life anywhere on the continental shelves, while Pressure Support 2 permits a diver to go anywhere – except for certain dark and terrifying chasms in the ocean floor.As water-breathers and creatures which don't breathe are largely immune to "the bends" (p. B435) and some other exotic perils faced by human divers, they will generally have little to worry about until they reach about 10× native pressure; hence, such creatures can usually take Pressure Support 1 as a matter of course. Only creatures with bodies adapted for deep diving have Pressure Support 2.

Yrth's continental shelf-dwelling intelligent races such as sea elves or merfolk usually have "native pressures" around 1-2 atmospheres *total*, as found in a few feet of water. This means that they can rise to the surface without discomfort, and dive to just over 400'-600' with no risks. Strange races of the abyssal depths can have much higher "native pressure," and indeed might need Vacuum Support to be able to rise to the shallows unprotected.

Senses: Unusual senses can be very useful in the murky depths. Dark Vision or Night Vision help when diving far from sunlight, or vision may be augmented (or replaced) by a Scanning Sense (usually Sonar). Many creatures have Vibration Sense – convenient for foraging around reefs or the seabed in murky conditions.

Intelligent underwater races also usually have the Speak Underwater advantage or some other means of communication.

Survival Skills: Sea creatures living around Ytarria can learn several specializations of Survival; Bank, Salt-Water Sea, and Open Ocean cover the most widespread conditions, while Reef and Tropical Lagoon can be very useful around Araterre. Survival (Deep Ocean Vent) would require a very exotic background . . .

Spells: Many of the above abilities can be granted by spells, and a few specialist wizards are experts in this field. Breathe Water is obviously relevant, but does not grant either the Amphibious or Pressure Support advantages; the recipient will still probably be a slow swimmer, and should, strictly speaking, be vulnerable to the bends – though generous GMs can rule that it grants the equivalent of Pressure Support 1.

GURPS Magic has further useful spells, including Swim and Walk Through Water. It also has others which members of purely aquatic underwater races might appreciate, notably Breathe Air.

The Sea Elf Tribes

Sea elves are native to Yrth, and insist that they are, simply, elves who happen to live underwater. They have an ancient history on Yrth, speak a dialect of elvish, and worship the Eternal. They and the land elves treat each other as equals and allies.

Of course, a water-breathing sibling species to an air-breathing, apparently-mammalian race makes little sense in scientific terms. The most likely explanation is that they were created by some very ancient act of magic.

In any case, they were around for long enough before the Banestorm to spread all around the continental shelf of Ytarria. According to their own epics, they were at least as civilized as the land peoples, mastering a gentle sort of underwater agriculture and building underwater towns of crystal and coral.

Unfortunately, the greatest of these were in the area of strongest mana in their domains – off the southern coast of Ytarria. And when the Dark Elves' Bane backfired so catastrophically, vast Banestorm-related effects manifested in precisely the same area, creating the effect now known as the Maelstrom.

Thousands of sea elves – maybe tens of thousands – died immediately. Their entire civilization was devastated. The sea elves themselves were overwhelmed with horror and outrage. They have never forgiven the "Storm-Bringers." While many elves may have at least a sneaking sympathy for the idea of cleansing Yrth of "problem races," there are *no* "Dark Sea Elves," and only elven restraint keeps sea elves from violence at the sight of the "dark destroyers." They see the

"intruder races" who appeared as a result of the Banestorm as far less of a problem, and may treat them with rather condescending friendliness, as fellow victims of the same curse.

In any case, the surviving sea elves were forced to revert to a semi-nomadic hunter-gatherer lifestyle. They preserve an oral culture of long, eloquent tragic songs and impressive artistic and craft skills, but they have been forced back to TL1; anything more sophisticated requires larger settlements than they have been able to sustain.

But this may, slowly, be changing. The sea elf population is growing once more, and trade and hard work have improved the tribes' conditions. They find that humans will pay well in useful goods and tools for some quite trivial sea-treasures and handicrafts. In a few places around the coast, small sea elf villages are appearing once again. They are using crystal and coral, of course; anything less beautiful would not be worth the effort in their eyes.

Yrth Dolphins

The other *possibly* native aquatic sapient race is a species of dolphin (p. 189). These look identical to Earth dolphins, but are more intelligent, with a fairly complex oral tradition and a fondness for practical jokes that does seem reminiscent of their Earth counterparts. They are generally friendly to other races, though they are far from saintly; they can be devious, lustful, petulant, or capricious. They use neither technology nor spells, though a very few of them have "mystical" powers akin to those possessed by some humans. They are natural wanderers; although they sometimes control broad territories, repelling competition for food supplies, they have little sense of property as such.

The Banestorm Underwater

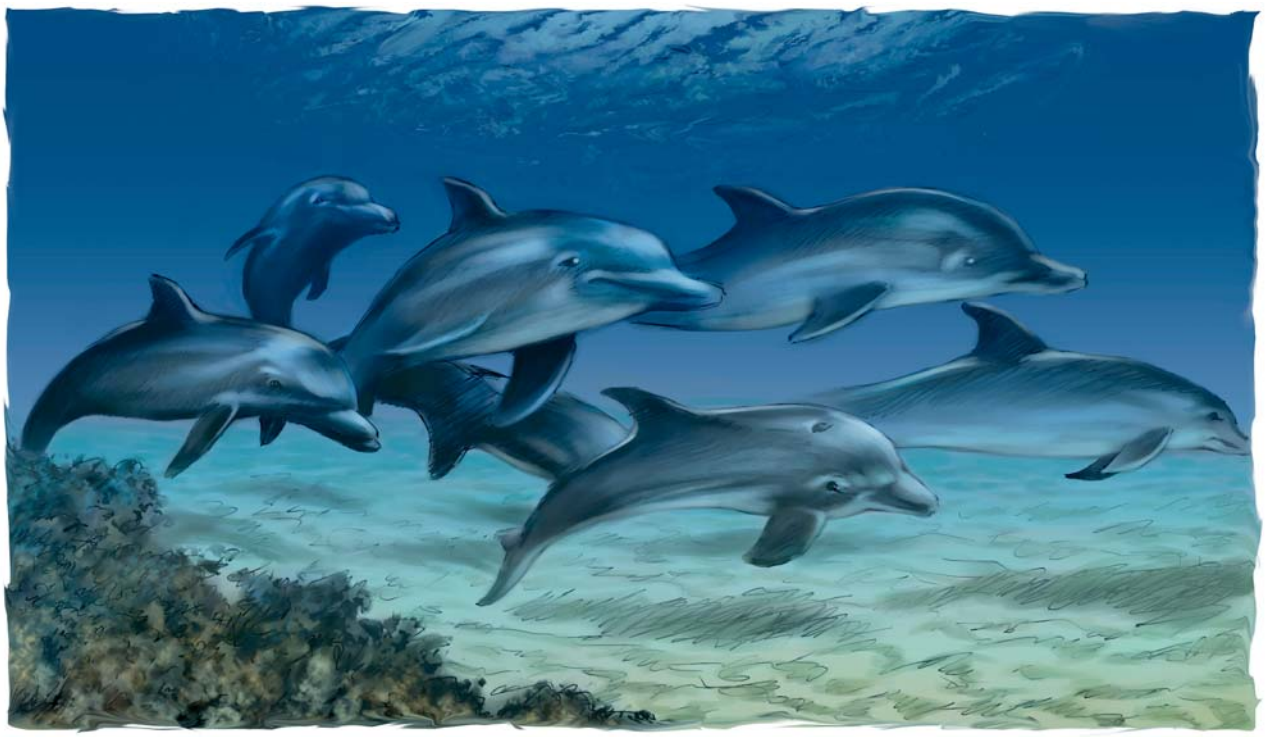
Banestorm manifestations do appear underwater, including the greatest and most stable of all – the Maelstrom. The "underwater storm" which powers this is *too* powerful to bring many creatures through; any that do arrive tend to be torn to pieces or battered to death by the Maelstrom itself as soon as they appear. Still, the Maelstrom is notoriously unpredictable. Occasionally, unfamiliar creatures swim out of its edges. Many are formidable; some are monsters which cause trouble for ships, coastal communities, or sea-dwellers.

The Maelstrom has brought through members of a number of intelligent aquatic races as well, and some of these have formed communities. The two most common come from the water-world of Olokun (p. 22).

Merfolk

Merfolk (p. 22) are purely aquatic, as their fish-like tails show. They have a tribal hunter-gatherer culture; some settle in small villages (based in either underwater caves or other natural sites, or small clusters of buildings), while others are nomadic. Their technology is TL0, moderately sophisticated in the creation of weapons from bone, stone, and shells, and in the use of nets. They are also skilled in the cultivation of a few underwater plants, mostly used for constructing shelters or as a source of fibers. The leader of a community is usually the eldest; they have some respect for age.

Otherwise, though, they are egocentric and self-indulgent. Still, they occasionally make friends with other creatures. Some are very competent with a small range of spells, which they learn through oral tradition; they favor mind control or illusions, mostly using spells to indulge casual whims or for self-defense.



Merfolk have spread around most of Ytarria's coasts, except for the far north; they can tolerate a wide range of temperatures, though they prefer warm conditions where they can bask in comfort out of the water.

Shark Men

The other race from Olokun mostly appeared in the waters around Sahud, where they were promptly named *samebito*. They are indeed similar to the "shark men" of Japanese myth; they also resemble creatures out of human horror stories, which leads people to judge them unfairly.

Shark men *are* predators, as their sharp triangular teeth suggest – hunters and warriors, but with a keen sense of honor as well as a capacity for aggression. They *might* eat humans, but only if they had good cause to kill them in the first place, and they can be persuaded that it is more tactful not to. They live in small underwater villages, mostly in submurged caves, and only possess TL0 craft skills, but they can make effective stone or bone weapons, and will trade for something better if it is waterproof. Their society is somewhat feudal, with a leader caste which the Sahudese politely call "samurai."

A few shark men know a limited range of spells, and one or two have traded to learn more from human wizards; they have doubts about the honor of using magic in battle, but are generally pragmatic. Some of their wizards double as priests of their strange lost gods (p. 83). They have not expanded much beyond the seas around Sahud; their population does not grow fast, and they prefer conditions there. They regard sea elves with incomprehension, and merfolk with casual contempt.

Occasionally, a shark man does go further afield in search of adventure. Unfortunately, such individuals often turn out to be outcasts or rogues, with less sense of honor and more *hunger* than most of their race.

Undersea Adventuring

Scenarios set below the seas of Yrth require a degree of ingenuity, as most PCs will require specialized magical assistance to venture there. Some wizards have the power to render such visits possible, though players are likely to be a little nervous about spell durations and the possibility of the magic being dispelled; there may also be a few magic items that help.

Sunken wrecks or the tragic ruins of sea elf cities may hold treasure or secrets, while there are often sea monsters to hunt down. Other underwater creatures may provide important ingredients for strange magics. Merchants may seek to trade with underwater races, and any PC who makes friends with such beings may wish to aid them with their problems.

Beyond the Seas?

Certainly, many Ytarrian humans know they live on a globe, that other lands may lie over the horizon, and that seafarers discovered whole new continents on Earth. But no continents other than Ytarria are known. A brave or foolhardy few have ventured into Yrth's far oceans – only to discover greater obstacles than anything faced by Columbus or Magellan.

Wild storms and huge sea monsters roam the oceans of Yrth. Most areas are low-mana at best, and some regions have *no* mana; wizards who have survived trips onto the open see claim that mana there is as unpredictable and unstable as the water itself. This hampers navigation and prevents divination spells from determining reliable information about any far lands. Some mages who push themselves to complete these spells are said to have gone mad. Some believe the distant lands are demon realms, their mana tainted forever by wild Banestorm effects. Using travel spells to fly or teleport beyond the oceans is considered suicidal.

Nonetheless, researchers believe there *are* lands far to the east and south. It's rumored that secret expeditions of the best Aralaise ships, with brave crews and expert navigators, have reached them – and returned. If so, Megalos is keeping the details secret. Other nations might want to launch their own expeditions, if only to prevent the Empire from gaining an overwhelming advantage. The risks would be great; perhaps the rewards would be greater.

Adding New Lands

GMs who want to design strange new realms have the rest of the world to play with. The new continents *can* be essentially "more of the same" – inhabited by the same intelligent races as Ytarria, with medieval-style societies and similar magical powers and monsters. Or they can be something else again: new races, different technology, and foreign magic. Maybe the Banestorm never came here . . . or maybe it did, but it drew from different times or worlds. A compromise might make use of the same races, but with, say, reptile men dominant across wide expanses of desert. Humans might be reduced to oppressed peasants in the oases. Coastal elves might be the last of their kind there, and goblin viziers and manipulators could rule the courts of the lizard-lords.

Even tentative contact with a thinly populated continent could make for years of stories: building trade networks and colonies, mapping, and dealing with rival explorers. Still, care should be taken; wildly different tech levels in other lands can easily unbalance a campaign or even throw basic plausibility out the window. Players tend to regard truly left-field developments as either brilliant or idiotic, but a GM with the right panache may be able to pull it off.

Chapter Five
Characters

"Have you found me a crew?"

"Aye, cap'n. They be waitin' on th' dock."

The old pirate shook his head as he surveyed the assortment of eye-patches, hooks, and wooden legs adorning the recruits. "Is this really the best that the taverns have to offer?"

"It's a bad time t' be lookin', cap'n. The accursed Prince's navy swept through last month, an' Black Edgar recruited most as could be found last week fer his venture t' th' south."

"Still – damn it, man, there are only six of them! I told you we need at least eight!"

"Oh, there's eight, cap'n. Just look down a bit."

The old pirate looked. Then his hand shot out. He grabbed the first mate by the shirt-front, hauling him forward. "A kobold?" he whispered unbelievingly. "Ye brought me a blueskin?"

"He's willin', cap'n. An' he works cheap."

"There's still only one of him."

"Ah, look down a bit more, cap'n."

After a moment, when his gaze had finally reached the waters beside the dock, the old pirate took a deep breath. "A merman," he said flatly.

"Aye, cap'n. Th' best navigator in th' Isles, 'tis said, an' good as any fer standin' watch . . ."

The world of Yrth allows for an immense variety of characters; the 30 races presented here barely scratch the surface of the possibilities. Also included are dozens of occupations.

Starting Points

When planning a ***GURPS Banestorm*** campaign, one of the first decisions GMs must make is the starting point level. The recommended total is 150 points, but ultimately this decision must be based on who the players are, what the campaign's style is, and what the GM wishes to emphasize and encourage.

25-75 Points – Ordinary Folks/Heroes by Necessity

Characters at this level aren't adventurers; they're ordinary people in unusual circumstances. This level suits gritty one-shots in which villagers must band together to take on a single monster. It can also serve as the starting point for an epic campaign as these common folk grow into true heroes. Players, however, will only be able to buy the cheapest character templates (pp. 202-207) and/or racial templates (pp. 188-202).

75-125 Points – Heroes in the Making

People at this level can triumph over minor challenges and are probably admired in their home villages. The wide world still holds many things that could easily kill them or worse, but in time they'll be able to face them head-on. PCs with this much to work with can purchase variety of character templates as well as the less expensive racial templates.

125-175 Points – Professional Adventurers

At this level, characters are ready for moderately challenging adventures right away and can noticeably influence local politics. They will be able to afford almost any of the provided character templates and can supplement it with an inexpensive racial template if they wish.

175-250 Points – Great Names on Yrth

Heroes with point totals in this range will already be well-known in their home town or city and may even have minor reputations in distant lands. With the possible exception of the 250-point Exotic Martial Artist (p. 210), any character template can be chosen at this stage and still leave points for all but the most expensive racial templates.

250+ Points – Living Legends

Characters with totals over 250 points can easily have reputations that span the continent; they're ready to take on almost any challenge. Insane djinn, greedy dragons, and malevolent dark elves are all fair game. Players will be able to buy any occupational template, beef it up with additional skills and abilities, and still afford a costly racial template, if desired.

Designing Characters

For the most part, building ***GURPS Banestorm*** characters follows the rules in the ***Basic Set***. The following section provides advice and rules regarding specific ***GURPS*** advantages, disadvantages, and skills.

Advantages

Alternate Identity

see p. B39

This isn't usually appropriate for an Yrth campaign, as there are very few governments or organizations that keep detailed records of their citizens. People can change identities merely by moving far away and changing their names. However, those who have gone to great lengths to establish themselves in two different areas (buying property, making friends and contacts, paying taxes) may qualify for this advantage.

Channeling and Medium

see pp. B41, B68

Advantages which help in communicating with spirits aren't required to communicate with Sahudese spirits, who can speak perfectly well. They may be useful for talking to the spirits of the dead (but see *The Afterlife,* p. 65).

Clerical Investment

see p. B43

Note that this advantage is *not* necessary for a member of a monastic order. Monks are not ordained priests and thus can't perform sacraments. For example, most Hospitallers (p. 62) do not have Clerical Investment.

Cultural Familiarity

see p. B23

The distinct human cultures of Ytarria are the Christian regions, the Muslim powers, the Nomad Lands, Sahud, and some outliers such as Bilit Island. Cardiel has areas of both Christian and Muslim culture. Many nonhuman races have their own cultures, including the Zarakun, elves, orcs, reptile men, and others. Goblins, halflings, and other races that have been assimilated into human nations generally do not have their own culture.

High TL

see p. B23

Characters may have one level of High TL (granting TL4) with minimal justification; many residents of Araterre are TL4 in all important respects. High TL +2 (TL5) is much less common, and people with this much knowledge usually have to hide from the authorities. Anyone with High TL +3 or more (TL6+) *must* take an Unusual Background, as described below and under *Skill Tech Levels,* p. 186. This is only allowed with explicit GM permission.

Jumper

see p. B64

This advantage is only available if the GM is using the Infinite Worlds background. Regardless, the IQ roll to make the jump is always at a -25 penalty, due to Yrth's nature (p. 26).

Languages

see p. B23

The languages of Ytarria are discussed on p. 33.

Magery

see p. B66

Most mages in Ytarria achieve no more than Magery 3, and even that is exceptional. Those who have a higher level, either as innate talent or through mystical training, must buy Unusual Background (Archmage), with a cost of 10 points *per level* of Magery above 3.

Patrons

see p. B72

A guild *can* be a Patron to its members, but not all are. Some are simply monopolies, providing no significant aid to members.

Power Investiture

see p. B77

This advantage is unknown on Yrth. Priests who can cast spells are almost always born with Magery. Those with specifically "god-granted" powers usually *don't* cast spells as such, having other supernatural abilities; see p. 26.

Psionic Powers

see p. B254

True psi powers are extremely rare on Yrth. Those who are genetically predisposed to become psis tend to develop Magery instead. (This is presumably caused by quirks in Yrth's mana.) However, psionic manipulators are not *completely* nonexistent. Most Ytarrians consider psis to be just a strange kind of mage. Actual wizards know they're something different, but such folk are too rare for most wizards to worry about.

Rank

see p. B29

There are three main types of Rank in Ytarria: Administrative, Military, and Religious. All confer Status. In most cases, high-rank characters will have additional Status beyond the "free" Status granted by Rank. For example, Archbishops of the Curia (p. 61) have Religious Rank 6, granting two free levels of Status. They also have another four levels of Status for which they must pay.

Religious Rank: In the Christian Church, Religious Rank follows the table below. Most other Ytarrian religions lack hierarchies. A highly respected Muslim mullah, for example, will instead have a positive Reputation and high Status.

Reputation

see p. B26

In a world without photography, reputations are usually carried by people's names or heraldic devices, not their faces. Someone with a very distinctive physical feature – a facial scar, missing fingers – *might* be recognized on sight by strangers, but this is atypical. Knights, nobles, and members of some organizations specifically wear coats of arms (p. 41) so they can be recognized at a distance.

Signature Gear

see p. B85

In a ***GURPS Banestorm*** campaign, this buys $500 of gear per character point. To price gear that is not TL3, use the rule on p. B27, under *Tech Level and Equipment*. For example, modern Earth-manufactured gear, being TL8, is valued at 32× its Earth price (five doublings). A $30 multipurpose pocket tool is "worth" $960 on Yrth, costing 2 character points if bought as Signature Gear.

Snatcher

see p. B86

Unlike Jumper (p. 183), Snatcher works at no penalty on Yrth. Bringing things *to* Yrth isn't harder than normal. (People in other dimensions trying to snatch items *from* Yrth will most likely get something from elsewhere. If what they want is *only* available on Yrth, they're out of luck.) However, sending items away from Yrth is always difficult. A second use of Snatcher will normally send the object home, but here, it vanishes and is then *destroyed*, unless the advantage has the Permanent enhancement. Regardless, this advantage is only appropriate if the GM is using the Infinite Worlds background (p. 236). Even then, this ability is very rare.

Social Regard

see p. B86

Some races, such as Halflings, have a special type of Regard:

Good Neighbor: You are treated with polite friendliness rather than deference or fear. People will do you small favors, pay attention to your opinions, and try to avoid offending you. This is generally a very beneficial, practical sort of regard, but if you try to claim superiority, other people will probably be puzzled rather than impressed.

Spirit Empathy

see p. B88

This advantage works on Sahudese spirits, the spirits of the dead, demons, and other related entities. All three of the above categories are legitimate specializations.

Religious Rank of Church Officials

Rank	Title
6	Archbishop, grand master of a great order
5	Bishop, grand master of a lesser order
4	Head of a powerful abbey or minor order
3	Head of a minor abbey
2	Senior priests
1	Common priests
0	Extremely minor local priests

Talents

see p. B89

This setting includes some new talents. All are mildly cinematic and might be inappropriate in very realistic games.

Born War-Leader: Intelligence Analysis, Leadership, Savoir-Faire (Military), Strategy, and Tactics. *Reaction bonus:* military officers, tribal war-leaders, and veteran soldiers. *5 points/level.*

Close to Heaven: Exorcism, Meditation, Religious Ritual, Ritual Magic, Symbol Drawing, and Theology. *Reaction bonus:* "religious professionals." *5 points/level.*

Halfling Ranged Weapon Talent: Bow, Sling, Throwing, Thrown Weapon (Dart), Thrown Weapon (Knife), and Thrown Weapon (Stick). *Reaction bonus:* archers and other ranged weapon users. *5 points/level. Only* halflings may take this talent, and that race has it by default at level 2. Unusual halflings may have higher or lower levels. Note that talents that include combat skills are generally unbalancing. The fact that this one is restricted to a specific race helps prevent abuse.

Trained by a Master

see p. B93

This advantage, and the exotic skills that have it as a prerequisite, are rare but not unknown outside Sahud and a few mystical retreats. See also *Disciplines,* p. 27, and the Martial Artist template, p. 209.

True Faith

see p. B94

This advantage allows the character to repel demons and undead, specifically including vampires and animated corpses created by the Zombie spell. It has no affect on lycanthropes, ghouls, or Sahudese spirits.

Unusual Background

see p. B96

Characters transported to Yrth by the Banestorm must take Unusual Background (Earth immigrant) for 10 points. This permits them three or more levels in the High TL advantage (usually they will have High TL +5), skills at the appropriate TL, Hidden Lore (Earth) (p. 186), and a limited

supply of Earth equipment, possibly bought as Signature Gear (p. B85). They will usually need to treat their background as a Secret, or risk having their memories wiped by the Ministry of Serendipity (p. 88) or its equivalent.

Characters from other worlds besides Earth – or from significantly *alternate* versions of Earth, such as Centrum – may be disallowed unless the GM is using the Infinite Worlds background (p. 236). They must buy Unusual Background (Planar traveler) for 15 points, and can have *any* advantages or skills justified by their story.

There are a few people in Ytarria who, while not from another world themselves, have picked up advanced skills from such immigrants, whether first-hand or not. They have Unusual Background (Technological education) for 10 points, and can have skills at any TL up to 8.

Levels of Magery beyond 3 also require an Unusual Background. See *Magery,* p. 183.

Wealth

see p. B25

Starting wealth for ***GURPS Banestorm*** is standard for TL3: $1,000 (1,000 Megalan copper farthings; see *Coins Across Ytarria,* p. 44).

Disadvantages

Amnesia

see p. B123

On Yrth, this Disadvantage is *sometimes* a sign that the character is a Banestorm victim, underground engineer, or other unfortunate who has fallen foul of a wizardly faction and had his memories magically wiped.

Code of Honor

see p. B127

Many beings on Ytarria follow some kind of Code of Honor. The Pirate's code is widespread among ruffians and rogues, and idealistic knights are sworn to Chivalry. In sophisticated areas, the upper classes may have the Gentleman's code, while Megalan legionaries follow the Soldier's code. Several professions have Professional codes, notably healers, who may obey something akin to the Hippocratic Oath. Some Aralaise barristers have a strict code of legal ethics, and merchants may follow a code that demands they always honor contracts (even verbal agreements), and never outright lie about their goods. Many craftsmen, *especially* dwarven masters, are similarly reliable. There are also a number of culture-specific codes:

Code of Honor (Arab): Never break a sworn vow. Never ignore an insult to yourself, your tribe, or your religion; insults may only be wiped out by an apology or some kind of combat. Remember your tribe's feuds and obligations. Ambushes and sneak attacks are cowardly between individuals but appropriate in warfare. Hospitality is sacred; someone who has been invited into your house or tent, or who has shared your bread and salt, must be treated with honor for three full days. Only physical violence or gross insults remove a guest's protections. If you are a guest, you should treat your host with courtesy and defend his honor and home, and not overstay your three-day welcome unless clearly invited. Repay past favors or hospitality in kind when possible. (This code originated among Arab cultures; hence the name. In Ytarria, it is widespread among Muslims.) *-10 points.*

Code of Honor (Elven): Never allow needless harm to trees or animals, and *always* seek to live with elegance and style. The world should be more beautiful and full of life for your efforts. *-10 points.*

Code of Honor (Halfling): Hospitality is everything; offer guests your best food and ale. When you are a guest yourself, repay your host's hospitality with small gifts, songs, and stories. Defend your host or guests, both verbally and physically. If you can't find anything good to say about someone who has shown you hospitality in the last 10 years, don't say anything at all. You may be terse and ungenerous to guests who stay too long, but you can't throw them out unless they insult you horribly or physically attack you. *-5 points.*

Code of Honor (Northman's): Anyone is entitled to one night of hospitality with no questions asked. Even a sworn enemy is a guest under your roof. Speak the letter of the truth, and honor a promise to the bitter end. If someone kills a member of your family, you *must* seek revenge, without subterfuge. Single combat is the most respected way. *-10 points.*

Code of Honor (Sahudese): Preserve face at all costs, and more importantly, defend the honor of your clan. Protect the life of your lord with your own, or avenge his death. Obey orders to the letter, and with single-minded intensity, except when it is your duty to disobey. Obey the rules of high and low war. Treat elders, spirits, and the wise with courtesy – though you don't have to obey them. Endure discomfort stoically. Suicide is *not* required by this code, though it will expunge extreme dishonor. *-10 points.*

Code of Honor (Stays Bought): Once you've taken money, you follow the job through, whatever it takes. If circumstances change substantially, you may return the payment with an explanation and an apology. You *never* betray an employer unless they lie to you or otherwise betray you first. If an employer stiffs you on a deal, revenge is not only permitted but encouraged. People should know where they stand when they hire you. *-5 points.*

Code of Honor (Theatrical): The show *must* go on. Once you've taken a booking, personal problems and minor difficulties are irrelevant. Avoid actions that would cause serious trouble for fellow professional entertainers. If your performance makes reference to real people or events, you must stick to the letter of the truth as you know it. You can satirize to your heart's content and leave out inconvenient details, but you can't actually *lie* on stage. *-5 points.*

Illiteracy/Semi-Literacy

see p. B24

In ***GURPS,*** illiteracy or reduced literacy in one's native language is a disadvantage worth up to -3 points. Many NPCs in Ytarria have this, but PCs, being exceptional people, may well be literate. If they aren't, however, the disadvantage, being normal in the setting, doesn't count against any disadvantage limits.

Intolerance

see p. B140

In Ytarria, as during Earth's Middle Ages, religious intolerance is often seen as praiseworthy and an integral part of proper piety. However, there are places where this is not true (notably Cardiel) and adventurers aren't *required* to be bigots. Further, even those who *are* intolerant may make exceptions for specific individuals. "For a godless heretic, you're a good man, and I'm glad to have you at my back."

Intolerance between humans of varying skin color is relatively low-key (likewise between light green and dark green goblins, and so on.). When one neighbor is an orc, it's easier not to notice what shade of brown a human neighbor is. However, between humans and nonhumans, and between different kinds of nonhumans, intolerance can be genocidal.

Low TL

see p. B22

Someone from the Nomad Lands, or even the hinterlands of Megalos, could easily have one or two levels of this.

Social Stigma

see p. B155

Three variations of Social Stigma are used in this chapter.

Perceived as an Animal: This is only suitable for intelligent beings that are *mistakenly* believed to be "just animals." (For genuine animals, domestic ones have Valuable Property, wild ones have Bestial. See p. B263.) You receive no intellectual respect, and killing you is likely not a crime. *-10 points.*

Barbarian: This is a variation of Minority Group and has the same reaction modifiers. You come from a society which is regarded as more violent and less advanced than the mainstream. *-10 points.*

Known Criminal: This is essentially the same as Criminal Record, except that it is explicitly the result of public denouncement, or obvious due to a visible mark (a brand, missing thumb or hand, etc.). *-5 points.*

Skills

Skill Tech Levels

Most people in Ytarria have skills at TL3. Some are more primitive; Northmen, for example, may have TL1 or TL2 skills. On the other hand, residents of Araterre often learn skills at TL4. Underground Engineers (p. 30, 54) might also have skills at TLs above 3, and recent immigrants from Earth could have skills at TL8. If the Infinite Worlds background is used, planar travelers could have skills of *any* TL.

Anyone limited to skills from below TL3 may take the Low TL disadvantage. Anyone with TL4 or TL5 skills must take High TL. For skills from TL6 to TL8, characters must take an Unusual Background (p. 184) *and* High TL.

Alchemy and Chemistry

see pp. B174, B183

Most people in Ytarria who have one of these skills also have the other. The best thinkers recognize that some reactions work everywhere (Chemistry), while others only work in places with mana (Alchemy), but mostly, people speak of Alchemy as if it covered both fields.

Astronomy

see p. B179

The factual aspects of astronomy, such as the locations of stars and constellations and the paths the planets follow, are mostly the same for Yrth and Earth. The moon looks distinctly different, but its orbit is the same. Immigrants from Earth take no penalty to their Astronomy skill except for those for going from TL8 to late TL3 equipment, though they're still likely to be quite confused.

Exorcism

see p. B193

This skill works against demons, but not as well as the Banish spell (p. B252). On Yrth, it takes a -4 penalty, or -8 total if the exorcist does not have Blessed or True Faith.

Expert Skill (Natural Philosophy)

see p. B194

Scientists in Anglish-speaking parts of Ytarria are usually called "natural philosophers," regardless of whether they have this skill. The term "science" is still mostly unknown. However, Ytarrian experts have begun to divide knowledge into groups that people from Earth would recognize – biology, chemistry, physics – and it is legitimate for a character to take the Expert Skill or those individual science skills, as appropriate.

Heraldry

see p. B199

See p. 41. Most people use this skill at default (IQ-5), but a person's Status may provide a bonus (e.g., +6 to recognize the local duke). A positive or negative Reputation can also give a bonus, if the viewer makes the frequency of recognition roll.

Hidden Lore (Earth)

see p. B199

In Ytarria, one specialization of this skill is Hidden Lore (Earth). This represents broad knowledge of the history of Earth from 1050 to the present day. High-ranking officials in the Ministry of Serendipity and similar organizations often possess this, as does any new immigrant from Earth, and underground engineers who have done their research.

Status and Wealth

Status is very important on Yrth. Each level carries certain rights and duties. PCs of noble or knightly ranks should often have a Duty disadvantage. Players should *not* start above Status 3 except in unusual circumstances. Status tables for Ytarrian societies appear on pp. 87, 121, 150, and 159.

Standard starting wealth on Yrth is $1,000: 1,000 copper coins. Characters should have a level of wealth appropriate to their status. In general, almost any noble should be Wealthy or Very Wealthy; those of knightly rank (Status 2 or 3) should be Wealthy or Comfortable; anyone of Status 1 (merchant, squire, etc.) should be of Comfortable or Average wealth. Likewise, characters with negative status should have appropriate poverty.

Any large discrepancy between status, skills, and wealth should have an explanation in the character's history. If Tate the farmer is very rich, he obviously has a big farm. If Alis the talented mage is dead broke, she may be spending her time in non-paying pursuits. If Akhtar the noble has merely average wealth, he might be a second son, or a victim of a natural disaster.

What Cost of Living Gets You

This list contains examples of how people of each Status level live and travel in Ytarria.

Status 8: At least one major palace, and several smaller palaces and castles, along with large hunting preserves complete with hunting lodges. Formidable guards, leading nobles competing to act as your servants, and whole government departments dedicated to managing your wardrobe, horses, and carriages.

Status 7: A large palace or formidable castle, and probably several other castles or mansions. Professional guards, knights or those of similar rank as your leading servants, and hundreds of lesser staff. A larger wardrobe than you could ever use, professionally managed, and stables full of fine horses.

Status 6: A moderate-sized palace, great castle, or very fine mansion, and probably several other estates. Some competent guards and a modest army of servants. A large wardrobe and stables full of good horses.

Status 5: A good castle or fortified manor, and some lesser holdings. Plenty of servants to run your dwellings, including trained guards. A large wardrobe, several good horses, and plenty of adequate mounts for your family and personal servants.

Status 4: A castle, fortified manor, or great town house, and probably subsidiary estates, with all the servants needed to run them. Some ordinary soldiers and their captain as guards. A substantial wardrobe, a good horse or two, and mounts for the high-Status members of your household (with spares).

Status 3: A manor, keep, or large town house, with servants, some of them lightly armed. A couple of squires or captains to support you in battle if necessary. Multiple changes of clothes, including some fine court wear. Decent horses for you and your high-Status companions, and one or two spares.

Status 2: A reasonable rural house *or* a fine town house *or* quarters in some great establishment. Staff to run your home, including a squire or well-armed warrior or two. A good wardrobe, including formal wear. Adequate warhorses or handsome "civilian" mounts for yourself and your armed retainers.

Status 1: A comfortable country house or adequate town house, *or* good quarters in a grander employer/patron's establishment. Several servants, some possibly armed. Several changes of clothes. A horse to suit your needs, and probably a mule or two for your servants.

Status 0: A rural cottage (probably held in fief or rented), or several rented or small rooms in town. Possibly a servant or two, or at least family members to help you out. A couple of changes of clothes, one set adequately smart. A mule or ox in the country; in town, enough credit to hire or borrow a mount if you need to travel short distances.

Status -1: A small cottage belonging to your liege lord, a single rented room in town, or minimal quarters in the dingiest corners of some large establishment. Adequate clothes for your work, and probably some rags in case of emergencies.

Status -2: Shared quarters somewhere not very comfortable . . . or whatever space you can find.

Nonhuman Races

This section presents 30 racial templates representing the major and minor intelligent races of Ytarria, most of whom are described on pp. 18-23. The templates follow the rules given in the ***Basic Set***. After the template for each race appear suggestions for modifying it. Be sure to check templates against those traits which are modified for Yrth, listed earlier in this chapter.

Many of these races will not be suitable for all campaigns. For example, dolphins and merfolk can't venture into a dry cave or attend a diplomatic ball unless magically enhanced, which will likely be prohibitively expensive for all but the most heroic campaigns. Other races are exceedingly rare (such as insect men), or likely to be attacked if they come too near civilization (e.g., trolls). Be sure to check your choice with the GM.

Centaurs

100 points

Centaurs combine the torso, arms, and head of a human with the body of a horse. Their upper bodies are usually – but not always – pale-skinned. Their lower bodies may be black, brown, gray, dappled, strawberry, or even palomino. Their preferred weapons are the spear and short bow.

To determine a centaur's height (at the top of his head), use the height given by the ST table without applying the +8 bonus, and add 8". Weight will be five times normal for a human of that height.

Attribute Modifiers: ST+8 (Size, -10%) [72]; IQ-1 [-20]; HT+2 [20].

Secondary Characteristic Modifiers: SM +1 (2 hexes); Basic Move +2 [10]; Per+1 [5].

Advantages: Enhanced Move 1 (Ground) [20]; Extra Legs (Four total) [5]; Fearlessness 1 [2]; Hooves [3].

Disadvantages: Impulsiveness (12) [-10]; Overconfidence (12) [-5].

Quirks: Compulsive carousing; Finds the trappings of domesticated horses (saddles, harness, stables) offensive [-2].

Some centaurs are much more intelligent than the average, with IQs of 13 or higher. They are called *sages* and will usually be experts in at least one field (e.g., Anthropology, Esoteric Medicine, Expert (Natural Philosophy), History, Literature, Mathematics, Meditation, Musical Composition, Musical Instrument, Naturalist, Pharmacy (Herbal), Philosophy, Physician, Psychology (Applied), Thaumatology, or Theology). Almost all centaur wizards are sages, though the converse isn't true. Those centaurs who journey into cities are usually sages, doing research or studying the natives.

Djinn Ascended Ones

627 points

Djinni are powerful immaterial beings; for further details on their history, see p. 174. For game purposes, a "djinni" is in fact two beings: the "Ascended One," and its human Ally, the "vessel." Each *can* exist without the other, but they are much more powerful in symbiosis. In theory, an Ascended One could have multiple vessels, but the effort of maintaining links with all of them, and the multiplicity of thoughts continually clashing in its mind, would make this intolerable, likely driving the Ascended One insane.

Ascended Ones are usually invisible but can make themselves apparent with effort; they appear as elven figures clad in robes, glowing intensely with a pure white light. Having spent centuries with only minimal contact with other beings, all Ascended Ones have problems dealing with anyone else except, to some extent, their vessels – and even vessels learn not to ask too many questions.

When an Ascended One uses its Possession ability, its immaterial "spirit body" remains "attached" to the vessel, moving around with him; other beings with supernatural senses may perceive this as a kind of enhanced aura. This works much like the Spiritual limitation on Possession, but the Ascended One *cannot* be exorcised, and its "spirit body" is a little easier to detect – and harm, with the right powers.

Every true djinn has a Mindlink to its vessel, who (if the Ascended One is a PC and thus eligible for the Ally advantage) can be treated as an Ally (usually built on 25-50% of the Ascended One's starting points and constantly available) and a Puppet. The Ascended One also acquires a Compulsive Behavior, emulating the vessel's habits and tastes, with a self-control number of 12. The value of this disadvantage depends on the nature and extent of the vessel's mental disadvantages and quirks; in any case, it is likely to be replaced by copies of the disadvantages themselves after a few years or decades, while the vessel will become more like the Ascended One in personality – the pair share so much they become increasingly indistinguishable over time.

A typical vessel is a human with above-average attributes, Magery 2-3, a long list of spells, a Nonhazardous Duty (15 or less), Reprogrammable, and a Secret (host to a super-powered spirit, worth -5 points). The Ascended One usually also functions as a Patron (extremely powerful or ultra-powerful, appearing on 15 or less or constantly, Highly Accessible); it benefits from keeping the vessel happy, as they

share many feelings. When necessary, the djinn can possess its vessel to use his own magical abilities to the full, or leave the human mind in charge while providing advice and using spells to assist him.

One of the first things an Ascended One does after acquiring a vessel is teach the human magical or alchemical techniques to prevent aging and protect against other mundane threats. Hence, he becomes effectively unaging and gains many other protections, but these are the result of spells or alchemy, not innate advantages.

A few Ascended Ones have bonded with less capable humans for one reason or another; these typically spend years driving the vessel to train and practice, to make the partnership less vulnerable. An Ascended One forced to take a vessel who lacks Magery and at least IQ 12 would regard this as a disaster.

Attribute Modifiers: ST -2 [-20]; DX +1 [20]; IQ +5 [100]; HT +2 [20].

Secondary Characteristic Modifiers: Fatigue Points +18 [54]; Hit Points +8 [16].

Advantages: 3D Spatial Sense [10]; Affliction 2 (Disadvantage, Reprogrammable, +10%; Malediction 1, +100%; Preparation Required, 8 hours, -60%) [30]; Charisma 1 [5]; Dark Vision (Color Vision, +20%) [30]; Doesn't Breathe [20]; Doesn't Eat or Drink [10]; Doesn't Sleep [20]; Indomitable [15]; Resistant (Immunity to Metabolic Hazards) [30]; Insubstantiality (Affect Substantial, +100%; Always On, -50%) [120]; Invisibility (Usually On, +5%; Substantial Only, -10%) [38]; Magery 4 [45]; Mind Reading (Sensory, +20%; Universal, +50%) [51]; Possession (Chronic, +20%; Puppet Only, -30%) [90]; Unaging [15]; Unusual Background (Archmage) [10].

Disadvantages: Dependency (Direct contact with original body; Rare, Daily) [-90]; Loner (15) [-2]; Oblivious [-5]; Stubbornness [-5].

This is a *basic* template; every Ascended One has numerous spells and skills, and usually improved attributes. Djinn also tend to have high functional Status (usually 2 or 3), great wealth, and a number of human servants, some of them loyal enough to be treated as Allies.

Dolphins

92 points

The dolphins of Yrth are just as intelligent as humans, though they tend to think about very different things. It's not clear whether they originated on Yrth or were brought by the Banestorm from elsewhere. Their oral tradition speaks of a time of great change "a hundred generations ago," but that could merely have been the arrival of merfolk and shark men in their waters.

Dolphins do have a spoken language, which they can use above or below the surface. However, no other known species can understand or speak it. They have little trouble understanding other races' languages but can't speak them. In exchange for services, sea-elven wizards make magic items that allow dolphins to speak Elvish. These usually take the form of "earrings," which dolphins wear by piercing one of their fins.

Dolphins get along quite well with merfolk and sea elves, poorly with shark men. Most surface people think of them as animals, but good luck to have around. Dolphin likes and dislikes tend to be simple: swimming, splashing, food, and sex. However, they also compose long ballads in their own language. When translated into other languages, these prove outrageously complicated and full of weird puns.

Attribute Modifiers: ST+9 (Size, -10%; No Fine Manipulators, -40%) [45]; DX +2 (No Fine Manipulators, -40%) [24]; HT +2 [20].

Secondary Characteristic Modifiers: SM +1 (2 hexes).

Advantages: Absolute Direction [5]; Acute Vision 2 [4]; Breath Holding 2 [4]; Enhanced Move 1/2 (Water) [10]; Injury Tolerance (No Neck) [5]; Nictitating Membrane 1 [1]; Night Vision 5 [5]; Peripheral Vision [15]; Pressure Support 1 [5]; Scanning Sense, Sonar [20]; Speak Underwater [5]; Ultrasonic Hearing [5]; Ultrasonic Speech [0].

Disadvantages: Curious (15) [-2]; Ichthyoid Meta-Trait (Includes Aquatic, No Fine Manipulators) [-50]; Impulsiveness (12) [-10]; Low TL 3 [-15]; Short Lifespan 1 [-10].

Quirks: Broad-Minded; Responsive; Weird sense of humor [-3].

Racial Skills: Aquabatics (H) DX [4] -12.

Features: Can understand but not speak the languages of other races.

Dolphins mostly associate with merfolk and sea elves and do not have a Social Stigma among them. Surface people, however, often regard them as nothing more than smart animals; a dolphin who will spend a lot of time dealing with that sort of prejudice should buy Social Stigma (Perceived as an Animal) for -10 points. Most have no possessions of any sort and are thus Dead Broke. Many dolphins have Gesture skill, allowing them to understand gestures made by others and to be surprisingly expressive with their body language. Almost none have Magery in any form other races understand, though some do manifest odd supernatural powers.

Dwarves

35 points

Dwarves are short, stocky, gruff miners and cave-dwellers. All male dwarves are bearded. Dwarves are moody: some are vulgar, others merry, surly, cruel, or dignified, but their personalities are always emphatic. Few dwarves are introverts. They are native to Yrth, and most live in Zarak (p. 157).

All dwarves are craftsmen to one extent or another. Status among them comes as much from craft ability as birth or heroism. They love gold and jewels, and will happily work all day to mine precious things and build with them. Anything they make will be both useful and beautiful.

Their preferred weapons are martial versions of tools: the hammer, the pick, and the axe. Their great strength lets them use massive weapons efficiently.

Dwarves love good craftsmanship and react well to any good craftsman or to proposals involving a challenge to their skills. They get along quite

well with gnomes and adequately with most humans. The newcomers may be fragile and short-lived, but they are also clever at some things, and appreciative customers. Dwarves dislike things that are shabby or ill-made, and pointless destruction enrages them. Some are afraid of open spaces; they usually stay happily underground. They have a keen sense of personal pride and honor.

Dwarves have 1 point in Signature Gear. This represents a beloved $500 item (or items) probably hand-crafted by the dwarf. Possibilities include an ornate, fine-quality warhammer or a beautiful set of craftsman's tools.

Dwarves are 1 1/2 feet shorter than human average for their ST, but weigh 50 lbs. more than a human of that height. Usually this extra weight is solid muscle.

Attribute Modifiers: ST+2 [20]; HT+1 [10].
Secondary Characteristic Modifiers: FP+3 [9]; Basic Move-1 [-5].
Advantages: Artificer 1 [10]; Damage Resistance 1 (Tough Skin, -40%) [3]; Extended Lifespan 1 [2]; Lifting ST+2 [6]; Longevity [2]; Resistant to Poison (+3) [5]; Signature Gear [1].
Disadvantages: Greed (12) [-15]; Intolerance (Racial enemies) [-5]; Miserliness (15) [-5]; Stubbornness [-5].
Quirks: Expects male dwarves to have long beards; Prefers gold to other precious metals [-2].
Racial Skills: Axe/Mace (A) DX [2]-10; Merchant (A) IQ [2]-10.
Features: Taboo Traits (Jumping, Running skills).

For their Intolerance disadvantage, the primary racial enemies of the dwarves are orcs and dragons. Many also dislike elves; this can be part of their Intolerance (with no point change) or a separate quirk. Similarly, some dwarves (particularly among Thulin's Folk) truly hate Megalans.

Many dwarves lack Greed or Miserliness, a great many are Honest, and some have Phobia (Open Spaces). Night Vision is very common. Some have extra points in Signature Gear; each point is worth an additional $500 in equipment.

Gargoyles

5 points

Gargoyles are an optional race only. Even if the GM makes them unavailable as PCs, they can make fine monsters.

Gargoyles are winged humanoids, with tough, grayish skin that resembles stone. They typically look like grotesquely deformed humans. They originated on Gabrook, and in Ytarria they live primarily in mountain ranges or on the rooftops in larger, more tolerant cities. Most are lazy and have little respect for learning, and they are generally regarded as pests. A few find employment as thieves. With their wings and night vision, they often excel as second-story men. The rest mainly scavenge for their meals.

When gargoyles mature, they are still very small, typically around 4' tall. However, gargoyles never stop growing. Most die young, but those who survive become human-sized around age 50, and century-old gargoyles can be fearsome winged giants. For typical young gargoyles (as represented in this template), height is 1 1/2' less than for a human of the same ST, and weight is 30 lbs. more than for a human of that height.

Attribute Modifiers: ST-1 [-10]; IQ-1 [-20]; HT+2 [20].
Secondary Characteristic Modifiers: SM -1.
Advantages: Blunt Claws [3]; Damage Resistance 2 [10]; Extended Lifespan 1 [2]; Flight (Winged, -25%) [30]; Night Vision 5 [5].
Disadvantages: Gluttony (12) [-5]; Poor [-15]; Social Stigma (Uneducated pest) [-5]; Ugly Appearance [-8].
Quirks: Moderately lazy; No respect for learning [-2].

Many gargoyles, particularly small ones, have Cowardice, and lots have Bully or full-fledged Laziness. As gargoyles grow, their Size increases, and they gain more ST and often more DR.

Elves

41 points

Elves are slender humanoids with pointed ears. Their skin can be any color found in humans. Hair is usually gold, silver, black, or red, and eyes are usually gold, green, or blue.

Most humans believe elves are literally immortal; in fact, there are few active elves over 700. Some become hermits, others seek out one adventure after another until they fall, and many simply seem to vanish. On the other hand, some elves, especially wizards, have remained active for thousands of years, and take careful precautions to protect their long lives.

Elven societies are egalitarian, with work split as equally as possible between male and female. They multiply slowly at best; children are rare, and seem to belong to the community as a whole. Some elves bond with a single mate for life; others are polygamous. They value creativity in all its forms: music, poetry, dancing, and storytelling. Individual status usually depends solely on age, although a talented bard or artist, or one who is well attuned to nature, will gain a wide reputation.

Elves get along very poorly with dwarves and worse with orcs. They are friendly with gnomes and halflings, and most elves agree that many humans are civilized. (The dark elves are intolerant of all other races; see p. 191.) Elves are incensed by needless harm to trees or animals. It is a point of honor among elves to always behave with elegance and style. Many people think this is snooty, and they're not always entirely wrong.

Attribute Modifiers: ST-1 [-10]; DX+1 [20]; IQ+1 [20].
Advantages: Attractive [4]; Gifted Artist 1 [5]; Magery 0 [5]; Musical Ability 1 [5]; Unaging [15].
Disadvantages: Code of Honor (Elven) [-10]; Sense of Duty (Nature) [-15].

Racial Skill Bonuses: +1 to Bow [2].

Any elf could easily have Intolerance toward orcs. Many have Animal Empathy, Perfect Balance, Plant Empathy, higher levels of Magery and Appearance, or a more-encompassing Sense of Duty.

Dark Elves

31 points

"Dark elves" are not a separate race; they are a xenophobic offshoot of elven culture. They think orcs in particular, and non-elves in general, represent an aberration, a crime against nature, and a threat to the future of the world and the elven race. Therefore, other races must be tamed or destroyed. Many dark elves live in the Blackwoods (p. 98-99) but they are found elsewhere as well.

Attribute Modifiers: ST-1 [-10]; DX+1 [20]; IQ+1 [20].
Advantages: Attractive [4]; Magery 0 [5]; Unaging [15].
Disadvantages: Callous [-5]; Intolerance (Total) [-10]; Obsession (Destroy or totally control all non-elves) (12) [-10].
Racial Skill Bonuses: +1 to Bow [2].

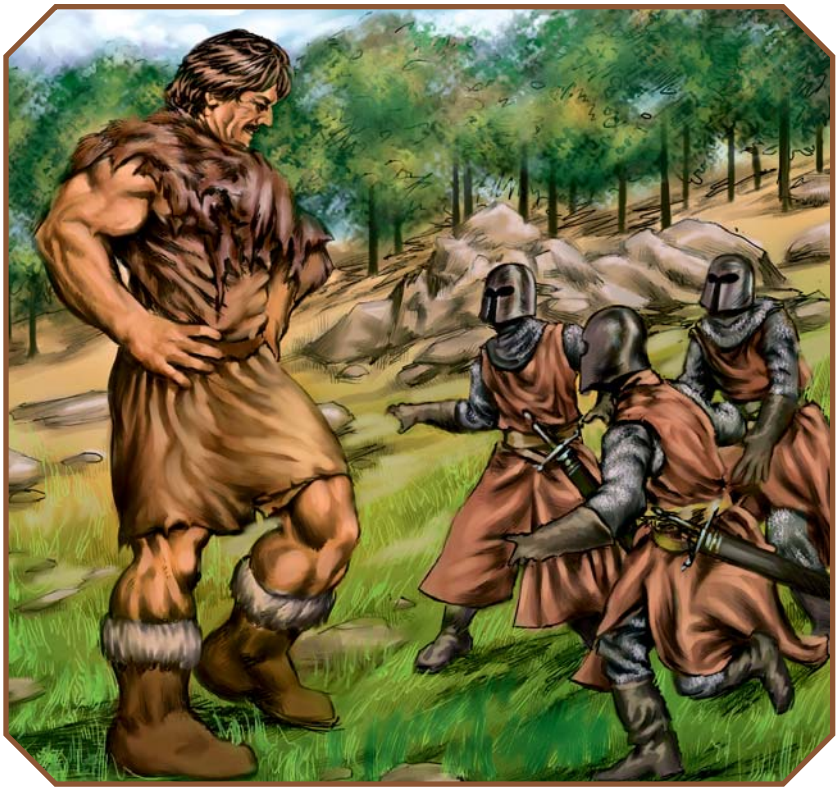
This template represents a typical dark elf. Many have higher levels of Magery or more antisocial mental disadvantages. A few lack Callous or Obsession, but their Intolerance is essentially universal. Some still have the Gifted Artist or Musical Ability talents, but generally their embittered obsession effectively suppresses those.

Older dark elves can also have peculiar supernatural disadvantages such as Lifebane – lingering remnants of the Banestorm backfire. Quite a few are lycanthropes (p. 200); this can be a hereditary curse or something they inflicted on themselves deliberately.

Half-Elves

27 points

Relations between humans and elves are occasionally fertile, producing half-elves. They typically have thin features and a mild point to their ears. They are welcome in any elf village, except among dark elves and in all but the most intolerant human lands. Half-elves can be found wherever humans and elves live in proximity, though they are not common anywhere.



Attribute Modifiers: IQ+1 [20].
Advantages: Extended Lifespan 1 [2]; Magery 0 [5].

Giants

122 points

Most giants look much like humans, only nine or more feet tall. However, they vary remarkably, and some giants have only one eye, two heads, or other unusual features.

Yrth's giants are generally private, preferring the solitude of their homes. They can be unexpectedly dangerous if roused. Most giants have very "human" personalities but are uncomfortable in human lands, where all the furniture is built for midgets.

Giants resent being compared to ogres. They react very poorly to that race, and to anyone who mentions them in any but the most disparaging terms. Unfortunately, many smaller beings mistakenly believe the biggest difference between the two races is that giants aren't as ugly.

For PC giants, calculate height based on ST before adding the racial +15, and then increase it by 60%. Weight is 4 times that of a man of the same ST (again, before the racial bonus).

Attribute Modifiers: ST+15 (Size, -20%) [120]; DX-1 [-20]; HT +2 [20].
Secondary Characteristic Modifiers: SM +2; Speed -0.25 [-5].
Advantages: Acute Taste/Smell 3 [6]; Damage Resistance 2 (Tough Skin, -40%) [6]; Enhanced Move (Ground) 1 [20]; High Pain Threshold [10].
Perk: Penetrating Voice [1].
Disadvantages: Bad Temper (12) [-10]; Shyness (Severe) [-10]; Social Stigma (Oversized Barbarian) [-10]; Stubbornness [-5].
Quirks: Hates ogres, and being compared to ogres [-1].

Some giants are even taller than portrayed in this template, with a larger Size, more ST, more levels of Enhanced Move, and possibly higher DR. Others are unusually different from the human norm, including cyclops with the One Eye disadvantage and giants with Extra Heads or Extra Arms. A few giants have Intolerance toward some or all other races; others lack one or more of the racial mental disadvantages.

Gnomes

-7 points

Gnomes are smaller and slighter than dwarves, and the men habitually wear their beards trimmed short. Their love of nature is equal to that of the elves, if different in style.

As a rather marginal race with many bigger neighbors, gnomes have developed a subtle talent for dealing with people while seeming innocuous. They get along well with the other Elder Folk except for orcs, have few conflicts with humans, and often treat halflings as kin. They like herding, the rustic life, and good craftsmanship. They are solid, centered, and matter-of-fact. While few become important in the world, they can make startlingly good professional diplomats and negotiators.

Gnomes are 1 1/4 feet shorter than human average for their ST, and weigh 25 lbs. more than the appropriate weight for that height.

Attribute Modifiers: None.
Secondary Characteristic Modifiers: FP+1 [3]; Basic Move-1 [-5].
Advantages: Damage Resistance 1 (Tough Skin, -40%) [3]; Green Thumb 1 [5]; Honest Face [1]; Longevity [2].
Disadvantages: Sense of Duty (Nature) [-15].
Quirks: Doesn't like to live underground. [-1]

Most gnomes have at least one of the advantages Artificer, Sensitive, Smooth Operator, or Versatile. In some locales they have Social Regard (Good Neighbor), typically at level 2.

Goblins

19 points

Goblins have green skin, pointed ears, and small, sharp, white teeth. Magic fascinates many goblins, and they respect mages. There are few mighty goblin wizards, but the race produces a remarkable number of hedge magicians and dabblers. They are great traders and merchants. They travel everywhere, trading where they travel, and wherever they go, a few settle down. There are no exclusively goblin nations in Ytarria, but they are the majority in several parts of Megalos, particularly in the Duchy of Yibyorak (p. 100).

Goblins are small and slender; height is normal for their ST, but weight is 10 pounds less.

Attribute Modifiers: ST-2 [-20]; DX+1 [20]; IQ+1 [20].
Advantages: Night Vision 9 [9].
Disadvantages: Impulsiveness (12) [-10].

Many but not all goblins have the quirk "Interested in magic and mages." For some this is a Compulsive Behavior (Hang around with wizards). Goblins are quite likely to have the Talents of Business Acumen or Smooth Operator, and their most successful merchants do not have Impulsiveness.

Halflings

0 points

These small, peaceful folk are mainly interested in farming, eating, drinking, and living the "good life,"

Insect Men

The bizarre insect men live solely underground, near the border between Zarak and the Great Desert. To date, only a few dwarves know they are more than just large bugs. The Zarakun of Ginnrel consider them a major threat and are trying to wipe them out. Doing so, however, is proving difficult.

Insect men are probably native to Gabrook, though no one is certain. They could just be a mutation of Yrth insects, affected by the intense magical "fallout" from the Banestorm in this area. This would explain why they only began appearing in the past decade. They are currently TL2; they've apparently learned a lot from their enemies in a short time.

Insect men are roughly the same size and shape as humans. They have hard, chitinous, bronze-colored skin, faceted black eyes, and long antennae. Like ants, they have different castes. Insect men proper are the intelligent guides for the colony; the taller, brawnier, four-armed insect warriors are servants and fighters. Both types are sexless; breeding is done by the queen and her consorts, neither of which are intelligent.

Insect Men

29 points

Attribute Modifiers: ST +1 [10]; HT +1 [10].
Advantages: Damage Resistance 2 [10]; Racial Memory (Passive) [15]; Silence 2 [10]; Telesend (Broadcast, +50%; Racial, -20%) [39].
Disadvantages: Chummy [-5]; Hard of Hearing [-10]; Low TL 1 [-5]; Mute [-25]; Sense of Duty (Colony) [-10]; Shyness (Mild) [-5]; Unattractive [-4].
Quirks: Humble [-1].
Features: Sterility.

Insect Warriors

25 points

Attribute Modifiers: ST +3 [30]; IQ -1 [-20]; HT +2 [20].
Advantages: Damage Resistance 3 [15]; Extra Arms (Two) [20]; Extra Attack (One) [25]; Telesend (Broadcast, +50%; Racial, -20%) [39].
Disadvantages: Hard of Hearing [-10]; Low TL 1 [-5]; Mute [-25]; Sense of Duty (Colony) [-10]; Short Lifespan 1 [-10]; Slave Mentality [-40]; Unattractive [-4].
Features: Sterility.

Many insect men and warriors have the quirk Secretive, and for some it is outright Paranoia. Very few lack any of the racial disadvantages; GMs should emphasize the resulting weird behavior.

Creating New Races

GMs can easily create new races or translate ones from literature or other games. Use the races here as examples in conjunction with the rules from p. B450.

To fit the existing setting, any new race will have to be secretive or rare. New "monster" races that live solitary lives in the wild are the easiest to add without changing Yrth too much. A race that lives in human cities will either have to be fairly low-impact (like kobolds), or exceptionally sneaky (such as ghouls). There certainly could be a race of shapeshifting humanoids, with no ambitions beyond survival, lurking in the alleys of Megalos . . .

GMs can also choose to deliberately shake things up a bit. Instead of dwarves, the nation of Zarak might be home to hirsute tommyknockers (in myth, a tunneling ogre). Or possibly the split between al-Haz and al-Wazif isn't one of Islamic doctrine but of race, with the Hazis being fierce Muslim jaguar-people. Certainly, the Djinn Lands of the southwest could easily be replaced with an isolationist country of evil snake-folk or worse.

but they make determined warriors when pushed. Halflings are stocky and round-faced; they almost never wear beards.

They react well to anyone who sets a generous table or offers to share his ale. Anyone who seems "wild" or "dangerous" will get a cool reception from a village halfling, though city-bred or adventuring cousins will be less timid. A bad reaction usually means snubs and closed doors rather than combat. Rare is the halfling who will attack someone who hasn't threatened his life or home.

Halflings are 1 1/2 feet shorter than normal humans of their ST but have normal weight for humans of their ST.

Attribute Modifiers: ST-3 [-30]; DX+1 [20]; HT+1 [10].
Secondary Characteristic Modifiers: SM -1; HP+1 [2]; Basic Move-1 [-5].
Advantages: Halfling Ranged Weapon Talent 2 [10]; Silence 1 [5]; Social Regard 1 (Good Neighbor) [5].
Disadvantages: Chummy [-5]; Code of Honor (Halfling) [-5]; Gluttony (12) [-5].
Quirks: Dislike large bodies of water; Staid. [-2].

Many halflings have an Addiction to tobacco; a small minority have Alcoholism. Some replace Chummy and Staid with Xenophobia. Many, even if they have no need for it, have higher levels of Silence.

Hobgoblins

-15 points

These ancestral kinfolk of the goblins are large, brutish, and savage. In the wilderness, a typical hobgoblin owns nothing but a weapon (stolen or handmade) and some rags or ratty furs. They are brutal and direct but not as cruel or malicious as orcs. They speak either a human language or a pidgin version of the old goblin tongue. They have simple tastes. They like food and loot, and dislike anyone outside their immediate band.

Attribute Modifiers: ST+1 [10]; DX+1 [20]; IQ-2 [-40].
Advantages: Night Vision 9 [9].
Disadvantages: Bad Temper (12) [-10]; Stubbornness [-5].
Racial Skills: Brawling (E) DX [1]-11.

Hobgoblins often have a tough time hanging on to wealth; many are Poor or worse, and very few have Miserliness. Some have more mental disadvantages, possibly including Intolerance. However, some have a higher IQ and lack Bad Temper or Stubbornness; they can be quite reasonable individuals, and often rise to positions of power within their band.

Kobolds

-60 points

Kobolds are small, blue, and belligerent. A single kobold is no great menace, but they often travel in gangs of 12 to 20. Most are wanderers, journeying from one place to the next, doing simple jobs or stealing as the mood strikes them.

They find activities not related directly to survival or procreation terribly boring, with one exception. Kobolds love jokes and pranks. They don't understand subtlety, but a hot-foot or a bucket of slop in the face (of someone else) amuses them immensely. They are quick to take offense for real or imagined slights and equally quick to forget, if distracted.

Attribute Modifiers: ST-2 [-20]; DX+1 [20]; IQ-2 [-40].
Secondary Characteristic Modifiers: Will-1 [-5].
Advantages: Reduced Consumption 2 (Cast Iron Stomach, -50%) [2]; Resistant to Disease (+8) [5].
Disadvantages: Short Attention Span (9) [-15]; Social Stigma (Uneducated) [-5].
Quirks: Easily insulted; Love practical jokes [-2].

Even exceptional kobolds are never very strong or smart. IQ and ST rarely exceed 10. It's doubtful there's *ever* been a 150-point kobold. As characters, they work best in comedy campaigns. A few manifest high levels of various Talents, which gives them an occupation, if they can keep their attention focused.

Intelligent Animals

These are *optional* additions to Yrth campaigns and may be ignored by GMs who dislike talking animals. All resemble ordinary beasts but have apparently been supernaturally "mutated" – or perhaps they are Banestorm victims from a world where animals are smarter.

Depending on the campaign, many "animal" characters will have Low TL and some kind of Social Stigma. However, creatures with Bestial can't usually take any Social Stigma except Monster; Bestial has drawbacks similar to lesser levels of Social Stigma. Such limitations might not count against campaign disadvantage limits, at the GM's option.

Great Eagle

18 points

Great eagles have 12' wingspans and weigh up to 100 lbs. In addition to their size, they are distinguished by their white head-feathers. Solitary hunters, they often drive intruders away from their territories in the Bronze Mountains, but they display a peculiar respect for "holiness" in other races, despite lacking any significant religion of their own, and *may* help the lost or injured. They take orders very badly.

They lack human muscle mass, but powerful necks and legs make them formidable close combatants. They have a language of their own, involving physical posture as much as sound, which humans can learn if they don't mind physical effort and hoarse throats. Great Eagles cannot speak other tongues, however.

Attribute Modifiers: ST -2 [-20]; DX +2 [40]; IQ -1 [-20]; HT +2 [20].
Secondary Characteristic Modifiers: Per +3 [15]; Basic Move (Ground) -3 [-15].
Advantages: Fearlessness 4 [8]; Flight (Winged, -25%) [30]; Sharp Beak [1]; Sharp Claws [5]; Social Chameleon [5]; Striking ST +4 [20]; Telescopic Vision 2 (No Targeting, -60%) [4].
Disadvantages: Bloodlust (12) [-10]; Dead Broke [-25]; Loner (12) [-5]; No Fine Manipulators [-30]; Sense of Duty (To the very pious and holy) [-5].
Features: Cannot learn other races' languages.

Noble Horse

82 points

"Noble horses" live in remote regions, mostly minding their own business, but can learn to enjoy the company of other races. Anyone who treats one like a mundane beast will quickly regret it. They combine strength with intelligence when they fight.

They retain many common horse instincts; most have Phobias regarding fire or snakes and dislike being confined, and their herds are led by dominant stallions. However, former leaders are usually permitted to retain some status as advisors.

Noble horses communicate among themselves with whinnies, tail-flicks, and subtle psychic impulses. They can learn to understand speech, and enjoy being given dramatic Anglish or Elvish names, but cannot talk.

Attribute Modifiers: ST +12 (No Fine Manipulators, -40%; Size, -10%) [60]; HT +2 [20].
Secondary Characteristic Modifiers: SM +1; Will +1 [5]; Per -1 [-5]; Basic Move (Ground) +3 [15].
Advantages: Acute Hearing 4 [8]; Acute Smell/Taste 5 [10]; Enhanced Move 1 (Ground) [20]; Hooves [3]; Peripheral Vision [15]; Telesend (Racial, -20%; Vague, -50%) [9].
Disadvantages: Cannot Speak [-15]; Dead Broke [-25]; Quadruped [-35]; Selfish (12) [-5]; Weak Bite [-2].
Racial Skills: Gesture (E) IQ+2 [4]-12.

Wise Owl

38 points

These huge owls, as big as small children, live in small tribes in the Great Forest. While not actually as intelligent as humans, they have an intuitive, empathetic facility and can sense the currents of destiny. They speak a quiet, warbling language and often learn Anglish or Elvish. They sometimes decide their wisdom is needed among other races – or perhaps some are simply natural meddlers. A Wise Owl will occasionally "adopt" a human community near the forest, serving as shaman and adviser.

Silent nocturnal hunters, they *can* function in daylight, but never like it.

Attribute Modifiers: ST -4 [-40]; DX +1 [20]; IQ -1 [-20]; HT +1 [10].
Secondary Characteristic Modifiers: SM -1; Will +3 [15]; Per +4 [20]; Basic Move (Ground) -3 [-15].
Advantages: Acute Hearing 4 [8]; Acute Vision 4 [8]; Flight (Winged, -25%) [30]; Intuition [15]; Night Vision 6 [6]; Oracle [15]; Sensitive [5]; Sharp Beak [1]; Sharp Claws [5]; Silence 4 [20]; Ultrahearing [5].
Disadvantages: Bad Sight (Nearsighted; Only in bright light, -40%) [-15]; Dead Broke [-25]; No Fine Manipulators [-30].
Features: Warbling voice.

Medusas

139 points

Medusas look like females of one of the humanoid races, with snakes instead of hair. They usually seem human otherwise, though some appear elven or orcish. About half have a "normal" skin color; the rest have exotic patterns on their skin, matching the coloration of their snakes. Medusas only have scales on their snakes; their bodies, apart from color, are usually completely normal, though a few have fangs, solid black eyes, or other unnatural features.

Medusas have two innate attacks: the poisonous bite of their snakes, and their ability to turn people to stone. The latter ability only works on animals and people (though not other medusas) and is difficult to control. Because of their tendency to accidentally petrify people, medusas are shunned by most other races and generally regarded as monsters. Thus, most medusas are raised in seclusion by their mothers and tend to regard everyone else with some degree of dislike.

There are no male medusas. To reproduce, females must mate with a human, elf, or orc. This usually involves some deception, though there have certainly been a few happy long-term relationships. In those cases where deceit is involved, the medusa's goal is to mate and leave without being attacked. They don't *usually* petrify the man afterwards, but rumors exaggerate the possibility. The children of these unions are almost always medusas, though a very few are boys born with a recessive medusa trait; their daughters or granddaughters may be born medusas.

It's unclear on what world the medusas originated. Their hybrid nature suggests Loren'dil, while their inter-fertility with elves and orcs makes Yrth itself a possibility. Currently, they live on the outskirts of human civilization. Many can be found on the islands of Araterre and Bilit Island.

All medusas have some magical talent, and some are powerful mages. For obvious reasons, they often specialize in illusion spells. Some also learn Earth college spells to be able to enhance or reverse their petrifying gaze.

A medusa's snakes do not act independently of her will, but they do reflect her mood in their actions. She cannot see through their eyes, eat with their mouths, or act through them in any other way. Any that are severed eventually grow back, but the loss is quite painful.

A medusa's petrifying gaze spreads out in a cone 15 yards long and 15 yards wide at the end. She can select who is affected; potential victims must be looking at her. For every target, there is a Quick Contest between her Will (minus a range penalty taken from the Speed/Range Table) and each target's HT (at a penalty if she has more than 1 level of Affliction). If the medusa wins, the target is petrified. (The distinction between "paralyzed" and "petrified" generally works in their victims' favor – e.g., they won't starve – so the medusa does not pay extra for this.) Someone looking at a reflection of a medusa is not affected by her gaze. Fighting while looking in a mirror is at a -5 penalty; attacks made with closed eyes are at -10.

Attribute Modifiers: DX+1 [20]; IQ+1 [20]; HT+1 [10].

Advantages: Affliction 1 (Petrifying gaze; Cone, 15-yard width, +200%; Cured by Stone to Flesh or Remove Curse spells, +150%; Extended Duration, Permanent, Selective Area, +20%; Malediction 2, +150%; Paralysis, +150%; Vision-Based, -20%) [75]; Immunity (To any medusa's gaze, rare) [5]; Toxic Attack 1d (Snake poison; Follow-Up to bite, +0%; Cyclic, 1 minute, 2 cycles after first, halted by medical care, +80%) [8]; Magery 1 [15]; Striker, Impaling (Snake bite; Cannot Parry, -40%; Weak, -50%) [2].

Disadvantages: Social Stigma (Monster) [-15].

Quirks: Dislikes other races [-1].

This template represents a medusa with some training in the use of her petrifying gaze. Inexperienced medusas might have different enhancements and limitations on the Affliction advantage. Malediction, Vision-Based, and Paralysis will always apply, but some may lack Extended Duration, Selective Area (if they can't choose who is affected), Cone (if they can only affect one target), or may have the Uncontrollable or Unreliable limitations. Powerful medusas can have higher levels of Affliction (making their gaze harder to resist), of Magery, and of Innate Attack (representing deadlier poison). A medusa with fangs will have the Sharp Teeth advantage and will be able to inflict her poison using either her snakes or her teeth.

Medusas have no inherent advantages or disadvantages relating to their appearance. People react to them negatively because of the belief they are monsters. Some are actually Attractive or better, and someone who can see past the rumors may realize this. Many medusas have Intolerance (Total), replacing their "Dislike other races" quirk. Truly nasty medusas, sadly common on Yrth, may have Sadism, Paranoia, and other mental disadvantages.

Merfolk

52 points

Merfolk look human from the waist up, fish-like from the waist down. They can breathe air as well as water and can interact perfectly well with humans near the shore. In the ocean they are very graceful, but on land they can only drag themselves around with their arms. They *can* get along with most surface dwellers, if they have a reason. They count the dolphins as allies, have much in common with the sea elves, and are antagonistic to shark men.

Attribute Modifiers: None.

Advantages: Doesn't Breathe (Gills, -50%) [10]; Enhanced Move 1 (Water) [20]; Nictitating Membrane 5 [5]; Pressure Support 1 [5]; Scanning Sense (Sonar) [20]; Slippery 1 [2]; Speak Underwater [5].

Disadvantages: Dependency (Water, Very Common, Daily) [-15].

Features: Aquatic.

Some merfolk are accomplished mages, though they cannot match the sea elves for depth or breadth of knowledge. Combat Reflexes is a common advantage; Curious is a frequent disadvantage.

Minotaurs

13 points

Minotaurs tend to be solitary and aggressive and will eat just about anything, up to and including people. They like battle and slaughter; their weapon of choice is a large axe, or a branch used as a club. They rarely use armor, unless they have looted it from a human victim. The few that enter civilized territory do so in order to find jobs as guards, bullies, or soldiers.

Minotaurs stand 3" taller than humans of similar ST, and have the weight appropriate for their height.

Attribute Modifiers: ST+3 [30]; DX+1 [20]; IQ-2 [-40]; HT+3 [30].

Advantages: Absolute Direction [5]; Acute Hearing 3 [6]; Damage Resistance 3 (Tough Skin, -40%) [9]; Damage Resistance 2 (Skull Only, -70%) [3]; Impaling Striker (Horns; Limited Arc, Front Only, -40%; Long, +1 SM, +100%) [13]; Magic Resistance 3 [6]; Peripheral Vision [15].

Disadvantages: Berserk (Battle Rage, +50%) (9) [-22]; Bloodlust (9) [-15]; Hideous [-16]; Intolerance (Total) [-10]; Loner (12) [-5]; Odious Racial Habit (Eats other sapients) [-15]; Social Stigma (Uneducated) [-5].

Racial Skills: Brawling (E) DX+2 [4] -13.

Those minotaurs that manage to make their way in human lands often lack Intolerance, Loner, and the habit of snacking on thinking beings. Berserk and Bloodlust, however, seem to be genetic. Some minotaurs have much higher levels of Magic Resistance; minotaur mages are entirely unknown. Note that minotaurs lack Social Stigma (Barbarian), as the stigma they suffer is entirely due to their other assorted disadvantages.

Ogres

28 points

Ogres stand 7 to 8 feet tall; they are half a ton or more of pure muscle. Most are just lone wanderers, haunting the wilderness and eating whatever they can kill.

Unlike, say, minotaurs, ogres have no particular innate hostility to other races. In the wild, they will react normally to chance encounters unless they are hungry. However, few people wait to see if an ogre wants to be friends. Ogre personalities are as one would expect from large, stupid humans; some are sullen, some just want to be liked. Most enjoy fighting.

To figure height, take ST before the +10 racial modifier, and increase it by 60%. Average weight is 5 times that of a human of the same (pre-modifier) ST.

Attribute Modifiers: ST+10 (Size, -10%) [90]; DX-1 [-20]; IQ-3 [-60]; HT+3 [30].

Secondary Characteristic Modifiers: SM +1.

Advantages: Acute Taste and Smell 1 [2]; Damage Resistance 3 (Tough Skin, -40%) [9]; High Pain Threshold [10]; Magic Resistance 2 [4]; Night Vision 9 [9].

Disadvantages: Hideous [-16]; Odious Racial Habit (Eats other sapients) [-15]; Social Stigma (Barbarian) [-10]; Social Stigma (Uneducated) [-5].

Some ogres are smarter or more social than the norm, and a minority understand that eating other people is frowned upon. Unfortunately, many of them have a lot *more* mental disadvantages than listed here, including everything from Bad Temper to Sadism. A tiny number are much smarter than the norm; these ogre geniuses are likely to have Magery instead of Magic Resistance.

Orcs

-22 points

Orcs are squat, hairy humanoids with small eyes and broad mouths dominated by enlarged canines; most other races regard them as ugly. Most

Octopus Folk

239 points

Like gargoyles, octopus folk are an optional race for ***GURPS Banestorm*** campaigns. In appearance, they are identical to medium-sized Earth octopi, measuring 7' from head to tentacle-tips when fully extended. They are just as intelligent as humans, though their personalities are quite alien. Mostly, they avoid contact with other races, though explorers in some areas may find they have trespassed on octopus territory. They are approximately TL2, and they quickly adopt technologies from other species. They are very formidable in combat, even without their sharpened coral weapons. Some stories say they can exert control over other sea creatures, including kraken. Their origins are uncertain; they may be native to Yrth, Olokun, or some other world.

Attribute Modifiers: DX+3 [60]; HT+1 [10].

Advantages: Acute Vision 3 [6]; Chameleon 2 [10]; Enhanced Move 1/2 (Water) [10]; Enhanced Move 1/2 (Water jet; Water; Takes 15-Second Recharge, -20%) [8]; Extra Arms (Eight total; Extra-Flexible, +50%) [90]; Extra Attack (One) [25]; Extra-Flexible (For first two arms) [10]; Night Vision 6 [6]; Obscure 5 (Cloud of ink; Sight; Takes Recharge, 15 seconds, -20%) [8]; Peripheral Vision [15]; Pressure Support 2 [10]; Regrowth [40]; Sharp Beak [1]; Toxic Attack 2d (Poison; Follow-Up to bite, +0%; Cyclic, 1 minute, 2 cycles after first, halted by medical care, +80%) [15].

Disadvantages: Cold-Blooded (Stiffen up below 50°) [-5]; Curious (12) [-5]; Deafness [-20]; Invertebrate [-20]; Low Empathy [-20]; Low TL 1 (TL2) [-5]; Short Lifespan 1 [-10].

Features: Aquatic; Doesn't Breathe (Gills).

Some octopus folk are very competent mages; others have more unusual supernatural powers.

orcs are brutal and treacherous, and respect only force; whether living as primitive savages or disciplined legionaries, the strongest and most ruthless among them will usually lead. They enjoy revelry, the spoils of war, and dominating those weaker than themselves.

Orcs return other races' hostility with interest. Many will gladly sacrifice their own lives for a chance to take a dwarf or elf with them.

Height is 2" less than normal for ST. Weight is 10 lbs. over human average for their height.

Attribute Modifiers: IQ-1 [-20]; HT+2 [20].
Secondary Characteristic Modifiers: HP+3 [6].
Advantages: Acute Hearing 2 [4].
Disadvantages: Bully (12) [-10]; Intolerance (Total) [-10]; Social Stigma (Barbarian) [-10].
Quirks: Doesn't regard betrayal as wrong; Kowtows to stronger people; Measures social standing by things "controlled" (p. 165) [-3].
Racial Skills: Brawling (E) DX [1]-10.

Individual orcs, even whole tribes, often have the advantages Acute Vision, Combat Reflexes, High Pain Threshold, Night Vision, or Rapid Healing. Common disadvantages include Bad Temper, Berserk, Gluttony, Greed, Sadism, and Unattractive Appearance (though some orcs manage rugged good looks). However, civilized orcs do not usually have Intolerance and may even lack Bully.

Half-Orcs

6 points

Half-orcs are the offspring of orcs and humans. In most cases, the relationship was *not* consensual. A half-orc can pass for a husky human but is usually unattractive. Their acceptance in orc tribes depends on their strength and ferocity. Humans usually look down on them.

Attribute Modifiers: HT+1 [10].
Secondary Characteristic Modifiers: HP+2 [4].
Advantages: Acute Hearing 1 [2].
Disadvantages: Social Stigma (Minority Group) [-10].

Reptile Men

58 points

In appearance, reptile men are large, bipedal lizards. They come in many colors, and their shimmering scales grant them surprising beauty. However, their teeth, claws, and alien nature make them fearsome. They are decidedly carnivorous.

They prefer hot, open plains and savannahs like the world they came from, Gabrook. Reptile men tend to be very suspicious of other races and prefer to keep to themselves. The languages of most other races, including all those native to Yrth, Earth, and Loren'dil, are difficult for them to master; they always speak them with an accent.

Reptile Men enjoy hunting, combat, and lying in the sun. They get along well with dragons, but relationships with other races are strained. Horses unused to them find them terrifying; riders must make a Riding roll to keep their mounts from shying and throwing them when they first encounter a reptile man.

Reptile men have normal height for their ST, and weigh 30 lbs. more than humans of the same height.

Attribute Modifiers: ST +4 (Size, -10%) [36]; IQ -1 [-20]; HT +2 [20].
Secondary Characteristic Modifiers: SM +1.
Advantages: Damage Resistance 1 (Tough Skin, -40%) [3]; Longevity [2]; Nictitating Membrane 3 [3]; Peripheral Vision [15]; Sharp Claws [5]; Sharp Teeth [1]; Temperature Tolerance 5 (Centered at 80°) [5].
Disadvantages: Shyness (Mild) [-5]; Social Stigma (Barbarian) [-10].
Racial Skills: Camouflage (E) IQ [1] -9; Survival (Desert) (A) Per [2]-9.
Features: Can't learn most other languages beyond the Accented level.

Some reptile men, particularly in the Great Desert, have the disadvantage Odious Racial Habit (Eats other sapients) [-15]; they are responsible for much of the social stigma the race as a whole bears. Very few ever get over their Shyness. Common advantages and disadvantages among reptile men include Hard to Kill, Hard to Subdue, Honesty, Selfish, and Stubbornness.

The "Monster Races"

Humans and other races who live in human lands divide the sapient races of Ytarria into "people" and "monsters." The list of monsters generally includes gargoyles, ghouls, lycanthropes, medusas, minotaurs, ogres, orcs, reptile men, shark men, sphinxes, trolls, and vampires, among others. Insect men will most likely go on this list when people learn of them. For ogres, orcs, and reptile men, people draw a distinction between civilized ones and barbarians. Killing a civilized orc is murder; killing a barbarian orc is laudable. Individual gargoyles, minotaurs, and sphinxes can occasionally gain acceptance, if someone trusted vouches for them. Otherwise, the general policy for dealing with monsters is to kill them if possible and drive them away otherwise.

That said, on Yrth, not even vampires are *necessarily* evil, and players may want to make characters belonging to monster races. However, this can easily make the GM's job difficult at best, since many adventures aren't possible – or at least not survivable – if the party includes a minotaur, a medusa, and a ghoul. Playing exotic characters can still be a great deal of fun. GMs who wish to run an "all-monster party" should set the point total higher and prepare lots of adventures involving dangerous wilderness, haunted ruins, and attacks by intolerant racist humans.

Sea Elves

51 points

The sea elves are similar to their land cousins, but most are purely aquatic. They have gills, somewhat enlarged webbed feet, slightly webbed hands, and little body hair. In attitude and philosophy they are much like surface elves, though their primary devotion is, obviously, to the sea.

Attribute Modifiers: DX+1 [20]; IQ+1 [20].

Advantages: Amphibious [10]; Attractive [4]; Gifted Artist 1 [5]; Magery 0 [5]; Nictitating Membrane 1 [1]; Pressure Support 1 [5]; Unaging [15].

Disadvantages: Code of Honor (Elven) [-10]; Low TL 2 [-10]; Sense of Duty (Nature) [-15].

Quirks: Hates Dark Elves [-1]

Racial Skill Bonuses: +1 to Net [2].

Features: Can't speak in air; Doesn't Breathe (Gills, can't breathe air).

Note that sea elves' Amphibious advantage merely means that they can walk as well as they can swim. Most rarely do so, since they can't breathe air. A sizable minority, however, can breathe and talk above the surface as well as below. Their Gills and "Can't speak in air" features are replaced by the Doesn't Breathe (Gills, -50%) advantage (which for 10 points lets them breathe in and out of water) and Speak Underwater (5 points), raising racial cost from 51 to 66 points.

As with land elves, many have Animal Empathy, Plant Empathy, or higher levels of Magery and Appearance. Since they rarely encounter Dark Elves, their intolerance of them is only a quirk. However, some feel similarly about the shark men, which would count as -3-point Intolerance.

Shark Men

145 points

These sea-dwellers are gray-skinned humanoids with heads that resemble a shark's. They have numerous sharp teeth; their large eyes give them excellent vision. They tend to be pragmatic and direct.

Though they can survive and walk on land for a while, shark men have very little to do with those who live there. By and large, surface people regard them as scary. In return, they think of the "dry folk" as variations on one species, and thus strange and unpredictable. They get along poorly with merfolk – an old enmity from Olokun – and sea elves, who wish shark men respected nature more.

Shark men are heavy-boned and compact. Height is 6" less than human average for their ST, but weight is normal for ST.

Attribute Modifiers: ST+6 [60]; DX+2 [40].

Advantages: Acute Vision 3 [6]; Amphibious [10]; Doesn't Breathe (Gills, -50%) [10]; Damage Resistance 1 [5]; Fangs [2]; Nictitating Membrane 1 [1]; Night Vision 6 [6]; Pressure Support 3 [15]; Speak Underwater [5].

Disadvantages: Dependency (Water, Very Common, Daily) [-15].

Most shark men have no particular mental disadvantages that surface folk would understand, but some have the Fanaticism disadvantage in regard to their odd religion (p. 83), a sizable minority have Intolerance (Total), and, of those, a few have Odious Personal Habit (Eats other sapients). If there were more contact between them and the surface world, they would have a Social Stigma (possibly Minority Group, possibly Monster). A fair number have Magery.

Sphinxes

140 or 170 points

There are at least three distinct subspecies of sphinx on Yrth, all originally native to Loren'dil. All types have human heads on the bodies of giant cats, and can be of either sex. Leonine sphinxes, the most common type, most closely resemble Earth myths of the sphinx, having lion's bodies and feathery eagle wings. Slightly rarer are tigrine sphinxes, which have the bodies of tigers, and no wings. Their stripes continue into their head hair, but not onto their faces. By far the rarest are pantherine sphinxes, which have black panther bodies and bat wings. Their head hair is invariably black, and the skin on their face is dark gray. On all three types, the head is often not completely human, and may have fangs, very thin fur, or a slightly feline nose. A sphinx's front paws have one partly opposable digit, allowing them to pick up and manipulate many objects.

Sphinxes are very rare, most often encountered far from civilization. They are usually quite intelligent, and can speak at least one of the local languages. However, they are also bloodthirsty, and have little compunction about eating people. Their solitary nature is sometimes in conflict with a deep desire for intellectual stimulation, and they may spare a potential meal if it can hold their interest in conversation. Some exceptional sphinxes have an arrangement with a nearby village; the villagers keep them fed with livestock, and the sphinx in turn serves as shaman, natural philosopher, judge, and often executioner.

Attribute Modifiers: ST +6 (Size, -10%) [54]; DX+3 [60]; IQ+2 [40]; HT+1 [10].

Undersea Parties

Four races in this chapter live primarily or wholly underwater: dolphins, merfolk, sea elves, and shark men. Octopus folk make five if the GM approves them as a character race. Though shark men and octopus folk work best as enemies and strange encounters, that still leaves more than enough options for a water-based party. With a sea-elven mage, a stealthy merman, and a dolphin to provide muscle, such a group can get into just as much trouble under the waves as other parties can above. Possibilities include exploring ruined sea-elven cities, foiling fanatical shark men, and investigating strange artifacts brought by the Banestorm from Olokun, the oceans of Earth (a lost submarine is just a matter of time), or possibly even a world where Atlantis was real . . .

Secondary Characteristic Modifiers: SM +1 (2 hexes).
Advantages: Damage Resistance 1 [5]; Flight (Winged, -25%) [30]; Night Vision 5 [5]; Sharp Claws [5]; Temperature Tolerance 1 [1].
Disadvantages: Bad Grip 3 [-15]; Bloodlust (15) [-5]; Curious (12) [-5]; Horizontal [-10]; Odious Racial Habit (Eats other sapients) [-15].
Quirks: Particularly *intellectually* curious; Solitary [-2].
Racial Skills: Brawling (E) DX+2 [4] -15; Running (A) HT+2 [8]-13.

Tigrine sphinxes do not have the Flight advantage, reducing racial cost from 170 to 140 points. Many sphinxes lack the Odious Racial Habit and Bloodlust (though they usually replace it with some lesser disadvantage like Bully or Bad Temper). Some have Sharp Teeth. Pantherine sphinxes often have a much higher IQ and Magery.

Spirits

The origin of the spirits of Sahud is unknown, though there are many theories (p. 8). The Sahudese religion revolves around appeasing them, to get them to use (or *not* use) their powers. Spirits are very rare outside Sahud, except possibly in the Nomad Lands.

They vary radically in power and capabilities. All have the Spirit metatrait (p. B263). The weakest have almost no traits beyond that, but most of them have odd personality quirks and strange powers as well. The boxed template is a typical "spirit of the spring," such as might be found near a natural source of water.

Most spirits are not terribly intelligent, but will usually have good Will and Perception, and a fair amount of FP to fuel their powers. Many are tied to a specific locale by a Dependency (though the spring spirit in the template could follow a bucket of water from its spring, until the water was drunk or evaporated). Almost all are Selfish, or at least Proud; this is why appeasing them usually requires trained priests! Fortunately, most have a known fondness for certain items (often identical for all spirits of a given type), which can be given as gifts. Nasty spirits have Addictions, and may require sacrifices.

Spring Spirit

305 points

Attributes: ST-1 [-10]; DX+2 [40]; IQ-1 [-20]; HT+1 [10].
Secondary Characteristic Modifiers: Will+3 [15]; Per+3 [15]; FP+5 [15].
Advantages: Detect (Impurities in water, including poison, Common) [20]; Healing (All life on Yrth, +40%; Disorders of the blood or bladder only, -50%) [27]; Oracle (Only regarding events near bodies of water, -50%) [8]; Spirit Meta-Trait [261]; Telekinesis 10 (Water only, -50%) [25]; Temperature Control 10 (Affects water, never air, -50%) [25].
Disadvantages: Dependency (Water from its specific spring, Rare, Hourly) [-120], Selfish (12) [-5].
Quirks: Loves colorful crystals [-1].

Trolls

171 points

Trolls are large humanoid monsters. They have horny, warty, greenish skins, features which look like a grotesque parody of humanity, and slender but powerful frames. They are native to Gabrook, although curiously, dwarven legends from long before the Banestorm speak of similar creatures.

Trolls are dangerous predators (with appropriate senses and a surprising talent for stealth), but unlike the simple-minded, bullying ogres, trolls are solitary and misanthropic, even brooding. Some seem to terrorize other races because they resent anyone else enjoying themselves! They do occasionally come together in small groups, to hunt, find mates, or exchange knowledge. (They tolerate other trolls badly, but better than they usually tolerate anyone else.) The common exception to this attitude is family loyalty; trolls are often protective of their relatives, and vengeful if they're hurt.

Trolls are nocturnal by preference, like damp conditions, and are superlative swimmers and divers. Their ideal lair is an air-filled cave with its entrance underwater, but they can adapt to most environments; some have taken to living under bridges or even in urban sewers, from which they may have to be evicted by heroes. Others dwell deep in gloomy forests. Most speak the language of the dominant culture in the area, although they generally talk very little.

A few female trolls have Magery and marginally better intelligence, and know a few spells, which are passed down from mother to daughter. Amoral humans occasionally ally with such beings, and have taught them additional spells.

Trolls are more annoyed than inconvenienced by pain, and recover from damage that doesn't actually kill them quite quickly, unless it was inflicted by acid, fire, or lightning. (Some flaunt scars caused by torches or fire spells, which are not sure death for a troll.) Contrary to some stories, though, they don't reassemble themselves if hacked to pieces (although they can *occasionally* reattach limbs which were severed by a clean cut – treat this as a special effect). Another popular but incorrect story is that they turn to stone in daylight.

Attribute Modifiers: ST+8 (Size, -10%) [72]; DX+1 [20]; IQ-1 [-20]; HT+2 [20].
Secondary Characteristic Modifiers: SM +1; HP+4 (Size, -10%) [8]; Per+3 [15]; Basic Move+1 [5]; Water Move+1 [5].

Advantages: Acute Taste and Smell 1 [2]; Blunt Claws [3]; Breath Holding 3 [6]; Damage Resistance 2 [10]; Dark Vision [25]; Discriminatory Smell [15]; High Pain Threshold [10]; Immunity to Disease [10]; Injury Tolerance (No Vitals) [5]; Long Arms (+1 SM) [20]; Pressure Support 1 [5]; Recovery [10]; Sharp Teeth [1]; Slow Regeneration (Not Fire or Acid, -20%) [8]; Temperature Tolerance 3 (Centered at 50°) [3]; Unfazeable [15]; Universal Digestion [5].

Disadvantages: Bloodlust (12) [-10]; Callous [-5]; Curious (15) [-2]; Gluttony (9) [-7]; Loner (12) [-5]; Monstrous [-20]; Odious Racial Habit (Eats other sapients) [-15]; Vulnerability (Fire or Dehydration, ×2) [-30]; Vulnerability (Heat or thirst, ×2; Fatigue Only, -50%) [-15].

Racial Skills: Brawling (E) DX [1]-11; Stealth (A) DX-1 [1]-10; Swimming (E) HT [1]-12.

Quirks: Intensely dislikes full daylight and dry conditions [-1].

Interbreeding

Elves and orcs can both breed with humans, producing half-elves and half-orcs. (Or "half-humans," depending on your point of view.) Whether elves and orcs can interbreed is unknown. Elves deny it; orcs find the idea amusing. Half-elves and half-orcs can interbreed with either of their parents' races. The children may take after either parent's race.

Dwarves and gnomes can interbreed; the children are almost always of one race or the other. The same relationship holds true for goblins and hobgoblins, for orcs and ogres, for land elves and sea elves, and for the three types of sphinxes. Medusas can breed with elves, humans, and orcs, as described on p. 195.

Other biracial children are either impossible or extremely rare. GMs may permit them if they choose; combining or "averaging" two racial templates is usually simple. Note that races that can't interbreed may still be able to have intimate relations; see p. 21.

A few older trolls are exceptionally large; they seem to grow more in the limbs than the body, becoming weirdly gangling figures. Their SM may become +2, and they may gain another level of Long Arms, along with considerably greater ST.

A troll without any of the mental disadvantages or the Odious Racial Habit would be a pleasant-mannered rarity; many also have Absent-Mindedness, Bad Temper, Bully, Chronic Depression, Intolerance, Jealousy, Paranoia, or Sadism. Trolls are generally treated as monsters in Ytarria, although individuals of other races have occasionally persuaded individual trolls to work for pay.

The Accursed

The following races are considered cursed by mainstream Ytarrian culture. Lycanthropes may get a little sympathy, particularly when the cause is a curse, rather than heredity. Ghouls and vampires are simply treated as monsters. Of the three, only vampires are undead; ghouls are a living species with an unpleasant diet.

Ghouls

15 points

Ghouls are a race of carrion-eaters. They are pallid, hairless, and lanky, with black eyes and sharp teeth, and usually covered in filth and dirt. No one knows if they are native to Yrth or came from another world. They are usually found in caves near human burial sites on the outskirts of civilization, but some live under major cities.

Many ghouls get by without killing people, but some have been known to waylay travelers or ambush people in dark alleys. As a result, they are nigh-universally reviled. The best possible relationship between ghouls and non-ghouls is seen in a village which buries its dead shallowly, so the ghouls don't get too hungry.

There is a popular myth that someone who associates too closely with ghouls may become one. If they in fact carry a contagious disease responsible for their condition (see *Magical Diseases*, p. 28), this may be true. It would require months of exposure, minimum.

Attribute Modifiers: ST+2 [20]; IQ-1 [-20]; HT+2 [20].

Secondary Characteristic Modifiers: Basic Speed -0.5 [-10].

Advantages: Damage Resistance 1 (Tough Skin, -40%) [3]; Dark Vision [25]; Immunity to Disease [10]; Reduced Consumption 1 (Cast Iron Stomach, -50%) [1]; Sharp Claws [5]; Sharp Teeth [1]; Silence 1 [5].

Disadvantages: Disturbing Voice [-10]; Odious Racial Habit (Filthy, dirt-encrusted) [-5]; Odious Racial Habit (Eats other sapients) [-15]; Restricted Diet (Uncooked flesh of sapient beings, Common; Substitution, -50%) [-10]; Ugly [-8].

Racial Skills: Brawling (E) DX [1]-10; Stealth (A) DX [2]-10.

Lycanthropes

Lycanthropy is a hereditary curse afflicting families of all races (see *The Genetics of Magery*, p. 29, and *Magical Diseases*, p. 28). During the full moon, victims with insufficient will transform into wild animals, usually wolves. Some families imprison their afflicted relatives. In other cases, the victim avoids contact with others and returns in the morning, naked and dirty. However, far too often, the transformed lycanthrope attacks someone. A few learn to control it, but almost everyone regards lycanthropy as a curse. The most notorious lycanthropes are the Dark Elf werewolves who defend the Blackwoods (pp. 98-99).

Most lycanthropes are of one of the following six types, though GMs may

invent new kinds as needed. The ability to turn into one of these animals is represented by the Alternate Form advantage, with the limitations Trigger (The full moon, -40%), Uncontrollable (Potentially harmful, -30%), and Minimum duration: One night (-10%). With those restrictions, the sufferer can only change during the full moon, and may be unable to control doing so. This makes lycanthropy little more than a curse.

Listed below, for each type of lycanthrope, is the racial template cost, and the cost of the Alternate Form advantage for humans, with those limitations. For other lycanthropes of nonhuman races, be sure to compare the cost of the character's racial template to the cost of the were-form's animal template, and follow the rules on pp. B83-84. Lycanthropes who are more in control may lack one or more of the limitations, and some have learned to retain their intelligence, thus increasing IQ and buying off some of the Wild Animal meta-trait.

Werebear

Racial Point Cost: 30 points

Turns into a black bear, as on p. B456. For a human, the Alternate Form (Bear) advantage costs 30 points.

Wereboar

Racial Point Cost: 21 points

Turns into a large boar, as on p. B458. For a human, the Alternate Form (Boar) advantage costs 22 points.

Were-eagle

Racial Point Cost: -55 points

Turns into a very large eagle (12' wingspan), with the following template. For a human, the Alternate Form (Eagle) advantage costs 3 points.

Attribute Modifiers: ST-2 (No Fine Manipulators, -40%) [-12]; DX+4 (No Fine Manipulators, -40%) [48]; IQ-7 [-140].
Secondary Characteristic Modifiers: SM+0; Will+7 [35]; Per+9 [45]; Move-4 (Ground) [-20].
Advantages: Acute Vision 3 [6]; Enhanced Move 1 (Air) [20]; Flight (Winged, -25%) [30]; Sharp Beak [1]; Talons [8].
Disadvantages: No Fine Manipulators [-50]; Wild Animal [-30].
Racial Skills: Brawling @ DX+2 [4].
Features: Aerial.

Were-snake

Racial Point Cost: -82 points

Turns into a python, as on p. B458. For a human, the Alternate Form (Snake) advantage costs 3 points.

Weretiger

Racial Point Cost: 33 points

Turns into a standard tiger, as on p. B456. For a human, the Alternate Form (Tiger) advantage costs 33 points.

Werewolf

Racial Point Cost: -11 points

Turns into a timber wolf, as on p. B458. For a human, the Alternate Form (Wolf) advantage costs 3 points.

GMs may wish to assign additional traits to the animal templates from the ***Basic Set.*** For example, bears might have Bad Grip. See ***GURPS Bestiary*** for more detailed ways to handle animals as characters, including more racial templates.

VAMPIRES

100 points

Every vampire was originally a member of one of the sapient species. Some were brutally attacked, others were seduced, and a few chose of their own free will to never walk in the sun again. While vampires are not *necessarily* evil, they *must* feed on other people to survive.

Most vampires are not only unconcerned with ethics, but actually out of control. The urge to feed overwhelms weak wills, and they are often strong enough to take what they want. In short order, people realize there is a killer loose, and a careless vampire doesn't survive long. Crafty ones hone their stealth, and eventually become powerful and exceedingly dangerous. Vampires can be identified by their pallor and lack of body heat – except right after feeding. Their extended canines always give them away.

The vampire template is designed to be added to another race's template. It can only stand by itself for human vampires. Vampires' Toxic Attack represents the infectious vampirism contagion in their blood. If any of their bodily fluids touch their targets' mucous membranes or otherwise get into their bloodstream, the victims may be affected. This could happen while the vampires are biting them, in

Most vampires – at least, the smart ones – don't want to create competition.

a kiss, during unprotected sex, or by drinking vampire blood. Targets roll vs. HT+5 to resist outright. This is the default roll for an actual bite; GMs should feel free to modify it depending on the type of contact. A brief kiss could require a HT+10 roll, while drinking the vampire's blood could be a roll vs. unmodified HT or worse.

If the target fails the resistance roll, roll for damage. This is not actual damage, and does not injure the victim. It merely counts toward resolving the Infectious Attack, which is handled as for Dominance (p. B50). The default damage is 3d, but careful vampires can reduce this to a minimum of 1d. Victims must roll 3d; if they roll under the amount of damage rolled, in 2d days they turn into an independent vampire.

People who do not turn right away may still become vampires when they die. (This is the special Cyclic enhancement.) After death, victims must repeat the resistance roll (rolling vs. their HT at time of death), and the damage vs. 3d roll (the vampire's damage is re-rolled; don't use the same value). If they fail both, in 2d days they rise from the dead. (Victims who die *because of* the vampire's attack only go through the resistance process once.)

Most vampires – at least, the smart ones – don't want to create competition. Extremely careful ones don't bite their victims directly, instead bleeding them into a cup. Even those who continue to feed directly will rarely create new undead if they reduce the damage to 1d. Careless or ignorant vampires bite deeply, and typically create a new vampire one time in 40 (assuming HT 10 victims).

Some vampires *do* try to turn people, usually for companionship. The most reliable technique is to kidnap prospects and feed them vampire blood. This sometimes takes three or four feedings but is almost guaranteed to work eventually.

Attribute Modifiers: ST+7 [70].
Secondary Characteristic Modifiers: HP+4 [8]; Per+4 [20].
Advantages: Doesn't Breathe [20]; Immunity to Metabolic Hazards [30]; Injury Tolerance (Unliving) [20]; Night Vision 5 [5]; Toxic Attack 3d (Always On, -20%; Aura, +80%; Blood Agent, -40%; Cyclic (Special, upon death), +5%; No Wounding, -50%; Melee Attack, Reach C, -30%; Only vampire's bodily fluids do damage, -5%; Resistible by HT+5 Roll, -55%; Variable (Minimum 1d), +5%) [3]; Unaging [15]; Unkillable 2 (Achilles' Heel: Fire or Wood, -50%) [50]; Vampiric Bite [30].
Disadvantages: Dependency (Mana, Very Common, Constantly) [-25]; Dependency (Blood of sapient beings, Very Common, Illegal, Weekly) [-20]; Dread (Running water, 11 yards) [-20]; Infectious Attack (On Toxic Attack) [-5]; Supernatural Features (No Body Heat and Pallor, Except After Feeding) [-6]; Uncontrollable Appetite (12) (Blood of sapient beings) [-15]; Unhealing (Partial) [-20]; Weakness (Sunlight; 1d/minute) [-60].
Features: Vulnerable to True Faith; Sterile.

Many vampires – particularly those who survive their first few years – are also powerful mages. Possibly mage blood tastes better, so vampires select them as targets. Some vampires have a better control roll for their Uncontrollable Appetite disadvantage, and a few have overcome it entirely.

Adventuring Character Templates

This section provides standard character templates (see p. B258) for some typical fantasy/medieval character types. These are intended to be PCs, *not* typical members of their professions! Some templates have job notes attached, using the rules from p. B516. The spell-using templates (e.g., the Freelance Wizard and Priest-Wizard) use only spells from the ***Basic Set***; players and GMs with access to ***GURPS Magic*** are encouraged to add spells from that book. Disadvantages marked with an asterisk (*), such as "Bad Temper [-10*]," are assumed to have a self-control number of 12. The player may pick a higher or lower number if it still fits the template in terms of points and concept.

Assassin

125 points

Assassins are professional killers. Most specialize in quiet, efficient murder, priding themselves on the ability to strike and vanish before anyone notices. However, some, particularly fanatical would-be martyrs, don't care about being caught; they may actually wish to draw attention to the death of their target, even if they must die too.

Attributes: ST 10 [0]; DX 13 [60]; IQ 12 [40]; HT 10 [0].
Secondary Characteristics: Dmg 1d -2/1d; BL 20 lbs.; HP 10 [0]; Will 12 [0]; Per 14 [10]; FP 10 [0]; Basic Speed 5.75 [0]; Basic Move 5 [0].

Advantages: 15 points chosen from among Acute Senses [2/level], Combat Reflexes [15], Contacts [Varies], Danger Sense [15], Daredevil [15], Honest Face [1], Night Vision [1/level], Patron (Assassin's Guild or similar) [Varies], Resistant to Poison +3 [5], or Wealth (Comfortable) [10].

Disadvantages: Enemy (Families of previous victims, governments, etc.: Large Group; Hunter; Fairly Often: 9 or less) [-30] *or* Secret (An assassin; Possible Death) [-30]; and -5 points selected from among Callous [-5], Code of Honor (Stays Bought) [-5], Loner [-5*], or Trademark (Calling card or similar) [-5].

Primary Skills: Poisons/TL3 (H) IQ [4]-12 and Stealth (A) DX+1 [4]-14. Also, 12 points chosen from among Crossbow, Garrote, Knife, and Thrown Weapon (Knife or Shuriken), all (E) DX+2 [4]-15; Bow (A) DX+1 [4]-14; or Blowpipe (H) DX [4]-13.

Secondary Skills: 10 points chosen from among Sleight Of Hand (H) DX-1 [2]-12; Armoury/TL3 (Melee Weapons), Lockpicking/TL3, Shadowing, Streetwise, and Traps/TL3, all (A) IQ [2]-12; Alchemy/TL3 (VH) IQ-2 [2]-10; or Observation (A) Per [2]-14.

Background Skills: 5 points chosen from among Fast-Draw (Any appropriate weapon) (E) DX [1]-13; Climbing (A) DX-1 [1]-12; Camouflage and Savoir-Faire, both (E) IQ [1]-12; or Acting, Architecture/TL3, Disguise/TL3, Fast-Talk, and Holdout, all (A) IQ-1 [1]-11.

* Multiplied for self-control number; see p. B120.

Job Description

Prerequisites: Stealth 12+ and a weapon skill at 12+.

Job Roll: Worst prerequisite skill-1. On critical failure, wanted by the authorities.

Monthly Pay: $200 × worst prerequisite skill. Adjusted for margin of success or failure.

Wealth Level: Wealthy. Supports Status 1.

Bard

150 points

True bards are more than just entertainers, although they certainly can entertain. They are wandering singer-mystics and members of the Bardic Colleges (see p. 53, where many features of this template are explained at greater length).

Attributes: ST 10 [0]; DX 12 [40]; IQ 12 [40]; HT 11 [10].

Secondary Characteristics: Dmg 1d -2/1d; BL 20 lbs.; HP 10 [0]; Will 14 [10]; Per 12 [0]; FP 11 [0]; Basic Speed 5.75 [0]; Basic Move 5 [0].

Advantages: Charisma 2 [10], Musical Ability 2 [10], and 10 points chosen from among Absolute Timing [2], Acute Hearing [2/level], Attractive Appearance [4], Bardic Immunity (Only in romantic parts of Caithness, -50%) [5], more Charisma [5/level], Contacts (Bardic Colleges or other bards) [Varies], Cultural Familiarity [Varies]; Fashion Sense [5], Language Talent [10], Languages (Any) [Varies], more Musical Ability [5/level], Patron (Bardic Colleges) [Varies], Penetrating Voice [1], Reputation (For talent) [Varies], Sensitive [5], Versatile [5], or Voice [10].

Disadvantages: -25 points chosen from among Code of Honor (Theatrical) [-5], Compulsive Carousing [-5*], Disciplines of Faith (Mysticism) [-10], Enemies (Previous satire victims) [Varies], Jealousy [-10], Overconfidence [-5*], Phobia (Claustrophobia) [-15*], Sense of Duty (To their College) [-5] *or* Sense of Duty (All Colleges) [-10], Vow (Never to sleep in the same place for more than a week) [-5], or Xenophilia [-10*].

Primary Skills: Acting (A) IQ+1 [4]-13; Dancing (A) DX+1 [4]-13; Musical Instrument (Any) (H) IQ+2 [4]-14†; Performance (A) IQ+1 [4]-13; Public-Speaking (A) IQ+3 [4]-15†; and Singing (E) HT+4 [4]-15†.

Secondary Skills: Musical Influence (VH) IQ [2]-12†; Persuade (H) Will-1 [2]-13; Poetry (A) IQ [2]-12; Savoir-Faire (Any) (E) IQ+1 [2]-13; and Suggest (H) Will-1 [2]-13. Also, 6 points chosen from among Fast-Talk (A) IQ [2]-12; History (Local), Literature, and Mimicry (Speech), all (H) IQ-1 [2]-11; or Captivate and Sway Emotions, both (H) Will-1 [2]-13.

Background Skills: 5 points chosen from among Acrobatics and Sleight of Hand, both (H) DX-2 [1]-10; Makeup/TL3 (E) IQ [1]-12; Politics (A) IQ-1 [1]-11; Musical Composition (H) IQ [1]-12†; Carousing (E) HT [1]-11; Sex Appeal (A) HT-1 [1]-10; or Survival (Any) (Per) IQ-1 [1]-11.

* Multiplied for self-control number; see p. B120.

† +2 from either Charisma or Musical Ability.

Techniques

For simplicity, the only template in this chapter that includes techniques is the *Martial Artist* (p. 209). However, many of the warrior templates could use combat techniques, and players may spend discretionary skill points on techniques instead. (Feint, Retain Weapon, and Off-Hand Weapon Training, for example, are appropriate for either the Knight-Errant or the Swashbuckler.) Among the non-combat techniques in the ***Basic Set,*** Impersonate is suitable for a Bard or Entertainer who has taken Mimicry (Speech). (Many are quite good at imitating the voice of a specific well-hated noble.) Rope Up and Scaling are appropriate for Assassins, Swashbucklers, or Urban Rogues with the Climbing skill. Assassins and Urban Rogues with Lockpicking may want to put a point or two into Work by Touch.

The Bard-Wizard

Some bards also have knowledge of spells. For one with limited but useful magical talents, add this 20-point lens to the Bard template.

+20 points

Advantages: Magery 1 (With Song *or* Dance limitation, -40%) [11].

Primary Skills: Awaken, Detect Magic, Haste, Itch, Lend Energy, Lend Vitality, Magelock, Pain, and Spasm, all (H) [1]-11†.

† +1 from Magery.

Battle Wizard

150 points

Battle wizards are warrior-mages who learn spells with great utility in combat. They are most often found in the armies of al-Wazif and Megalos, though other countries have them as well, and they are sometimes independent wizards-for-hire.

Attributes: ST 10 [0]; DX 11 [20]; IQ 13 [60]; HT 11 [10].

Secondary Characteristics: Dmg 1d-2/1d; BL 20 lbs.; HP 10 [0]; Will 13 [0]; Per 13 [0]; FP 11 [0]; Basic Speed 5.5 [0]; Basic Move 5 [0].

Advantages: Magery 2 [25], and 15 points chosen from among Born War-Leader [5/level], Combat Reflexes [15], Fatigue Points [3/level], Fit [5] *or* Very Fit [15], Hard to Kill [2/level], High Pain Threshold [10], Military Rank [5/level], Night Vision [1/level], Patron (Guild) [Varies], Rapid Healing [5] *or* Very Rapid Healing [15], Social Regard (Feared) [5/level], Status [5/level], Wealth (Comfortable) [10], or Will [5/level].

Disadvantages: -30 points chosen from among Bad Temper [-10*], Berserk [-10*], Bloodlust [-10*], Bully [-10*], Callous [-5], Code of Honor (Soldier's, Chivalry, or other) [-5, -10, or -15], Duty [Varies], Enemies [Varies], Megalomania [-10], or Overconfidence [-5*].

Primary Skills: Innate Attack (Projectile) (E) DX+3 [8]-14; Apportation, Armor, Create Fire, Haste, Ignite Fire, Lend Energy, Lend Vitality, Minor Healing, Shape Fire, and Shield, all (H) [1]-13†; Deflect Energy and Deflect Missile, both (H) [2]-14†; Explosive Fireball, Fireball, and Recover Energy, all (H) [4]-15†; and Great Haste (VH) [2]-13†.

Secondary Skills: Armoury/TL3 (Body Armor or Melee Weapons) (A) IQ-1 [1]-12; First Aid/TL3 (E) IQ [1]-13; Soldier/TL3 (A) IQ-1 [1]-12; Survival (any) (A) Per-1 [1]-12; Tactics (H) IQ-1 [2]-12; and 4 points in Melee Weapon skills.

Background Skills: 4 points chosen from among Riding (Equines) (A) DX-1 [1]-10; Camouflage or Savoir-Faire (Military), both (E) IQ [1]-13; Heraldry or Leadership, both (A) IQ-1 [1]-12; Strategy (Land) (H) IQ-2 [1]-11; Thaumatology (VH) IQ-1 [1]-12†; Hiking (A) HT-1 [1]-10; or Intimidation (A) Will-1 [1]-12.

* Multiplied for self-control number; see p. B120.

† +2 from Magery.

Bounty Hunter

150 points

For most people in Ytarria, if a criminal leaves town, the problem is solved. For some, however, that's not enough. Bounty hunters specialize in tracking down criminals, alleged or actual, and returning them for a fee. Most try to return their quarries alive.

Attributes: ST 11 [10]; DX 12 [40]; IQ 12 [40]; HT 11 [10].

Secondary Characteristics: Dmg 1d-1/1d+1; BL 24 lbs.; HP 11 [0]; Will 12 [0]; Per 14 [10]; FP 11 [0]; Basic Speed 5.75 [0]; Basic Move 5 [0].

Advantages: 20 points chosen from among Acute Senses [2/level], Combat Reflexes [15], Contacts [Varies], Cultural Adaptability [10] *or* Xeno-Adaptability [20], Danger Sense [15], Honest Face [1], Languages (Any) [Varies], Night Vision [1/level], Patron [Varies], Sensitive [5] *or* Empathy [15], or Single-Minded [5].

Disadvantages: -20 points chosen from among Bully [-10*], Callous [-5], Code of Honor (Stays Bought) [-5], Enemies (Former quarry) [Varies], Greed [-15*], No Sense of Humor [-10], Obsession (A particular quarry) [-5*], Stubbornness [-5], or Vow [-5, -10, or -15].

Primary Skills: Brawling (E) DX+2 [4]-14; Fast-Talk (A) IQ+1 [4]-13; Shadowing (A) IQ+1 [4]-13; Tracking (A) Per+1 [4]-15; *either* Crossbow (E) DX+2 [4]-14 *or* Bow (A) DX+1 [4]-13; and 4 points in any one Melee Weapon skill.

Secondary Skills: 12 points chosen from among Knot-Tying (E) DX+1 [2]-13; Stealth (A) DX [2]-12; Area Knowledge (Any) (E) IQ+1 [2]-13; Streetwise and Criminology/TL3, both (A) IQ [2]-12; Intimidation (A) Will [2]-12; Observation (A) Per [2]-14; and Detect Lies (H) Per-1 [2]-13; or other combat skills.

Background Skills: 4 points chosen from among Riding (Equines) (A) DX-1 [1]-11; Acting, Disguise/TL3 (Own race), Holdout, Interrogation, Research/TL3, and Traps/TL3, all (A) IQ-1 [1]-11; or Diplomacy (H) IQ-2 [1]-10.

* Multiplied for self-control number; see p. B120.

Job Description

Prerequisites: Tracking 12+, Shadowing 12+, and a weapon skill at 12+.

Job Roll: Worst prerequisite skill. On critical failure, injured by target, take 2d damage.

Monthly Pay: $800. Adjusted for margin of success or failure.

Wealth Level: Average. Supports Status 0.

Charlatan

125 points

In low-mana Caithness, some people make their living by pretending to be wizards. Through psychology and sleight-of-hand, they convince others of their powers, then sell them something – a "magic item," a "love potion," or possibly "auguries of the future."

Agents of Serendipity

The Megalan Ministry of Serendipity (p. 88) employs many dupes and cat's-paws, but its most important field agents are very well informed indeed. They include spies, scholars of forbidden knowledge, wizardly experts in Banestorm-tracing or mind-wiping magic, assassins, and warrior-trackers.

All have one level of High Technology, as they are permitted unrestricted use of the TL4 knowledge which the Ministry has chosen to fully or partially "license," while the Ministry acts as a Patron. A powerful organization that makes its resources available to those who know how to use them, the Ministry may supply equipment or answer special needs (influence at the Megalan court; access to high technology or unusual magic), although only the most trusted agents receive such benefits. Most also have Hidden Lore (Earth), although very few have more than one point in this; the Ministry sees little need for agents to possess more than basic background knowledge.

On the other hand, working for the Ministry is both a Duty (details vary, but usually on 12- for -10 points) and a Secret, typically worth -10 points. If an agent is exposed, the Ministry usually reassigns him to a completely different location and job – although in some cases, it simply discards or eliminates a careless, low-value minion.

Some are harmless entertainers; others are hard-bitten con men.

An interesting variant is someone who fakes being a wizard through advanced technology. A few clockwork devices and a bit of gunpowder can go a long way. To make this sort of character, combine the best parts of this template with the Underground Engineer, p. 215.

Attributes: ST 10 [0]; DX 12 [40]; IQ 13 [60]; HT 10 [0].

Secondary Characteristics: Dmg 1d-2/1d; BL 20 lbs.; HP 10 [0]; Will 13 [0]; Per 13 [0]; FP 10 [0]; Basic Speed 5.5 [0]; Basic Move 5 [0].

Advantages: Smooth Operator 1 [15], and 15 points chosen from among Absolute Timing [2], Acute Hearing [2/level], Charisma [5/level], Danger Sense [15], Empathy [15], Flexibility [5] *or* Double-Jointed [15], High Manual Dexterity [5/level], Honest Face [1], Intuition [15], Penetrating Voice [1], or Voice [10].

Disadvantages: -30 points chosen from among Callous [-5], Chummy [-5] *or* Gregarious [-10], Combat Paralysis [-15], Compulsive Lying [15*], Delusion (I am a wizard) [-5, -10, or -15], Enemies [Varies], Greed [-15*], Overconfidence [-5*], or Trickster [-15*].

Primary Skills: Fast-Talk (A) IQ+2 [4]-15†, Psychology (H) IQ [4]-13, and Sleight Of Hand (H) DX+1 [8] -13.

Secondary Skills: Acting (A) IQ+1 [2] -14† and Holdout (A) IQ [2]-13.

Background Skills: 5 points chosen from among Escape (H) DX-2 [1] -10; Savoir-Faire (High Society) (E) IQ+1 [1]-14†; Animal Handling (any), Disguise/TL3 (Own race), and Performance, all (A) IQ-1 [1] -12; Public Speaking and Streetwise, both (A) IQ [1]-13†; Hypnotism and Ventriloquism, both (H) IQ-2 [1]-11; Diplomacy (H) IQ-1 [1]-12†; Carousing (E) HT+1 [1]-11†; Sex Appeal (A) HT [1]-10†; Intimidation (A) Will [1] -13†; Lip Reading (A) Per-1 [1]-12; or Detect Lies (H) Per-1 [1]-12†.

* Multiplied for self-control number; see p. B120.

† +1 from Smooth Operator.

Courtier

115 points

A courtier can be almost anyone who serves in a noble court, from a diplomat to a herald. The best are keen observers and careful when they speak.

Spies: A few courtiers are in fact spies, either working for a rival power or keeping an eye on individuals and events on behalf of some court faction. Courtier-spies will almost always have Contacts and a Secret, and may add Current Affairs, Intelligence Analysis, Observation, Shadowing, or Stealth to their skill lists. Amoral information-dealers might have Merchant; the deadlier or more flamboyant types may have Enemies, significant combat ability, or Poisons skill.

Attributes: ST 10 [0]; DX 10 [0]; IQ 12 [40]; HT 11 [10].

Secondary Characteristics: Dmg 1d-2/1d; BL 20 lbs.; HP 10 [0]; Will 12 [0]; Per 14 [10]; FP 11 [0]; Basic Speed 5.25 [0]; Basic Move 5 [0].

Advantages: Smooth Operator 1 [15], Status 1 [5], and 20 points chosen from among Acute Senses [2/level], Appearance (Attractive) [4], Charisma [5/level], Contacts [Varies], Danger Sense [15], Eidetic Memory [5] *or* Photographic Memory [10], Fashion Sense [5], Favors [Varies], Honest Face [1], Independent Income [1/level], Language Talent [10], Languages (Any) [Varies], No Hangover [1], Patron (A noble) [Varies], Pitiable [5], Rank (Administrative, Military, Religious, or other) [5/level], Reputation [Varies], Sensitive [5] *or* Empathy [15], Social Chameleon [5], another level of Smooth Operator [15], more Status [5/level], Voice [10], or Wealth (Comfortable) [10] *or* Wealth (Wealthy) [20].

Disadvantages: -20 points chosen from among Addiction [Varies], Code of Honor (Gentleman's, Chivalry, or any similar) [-5, -10, or -15], Duty [Varies], Enemy (Political rival or other) [Varies], Fanaticism [-15], Greed [-15*], Jealousy [-10], Lecherousness [-15*], Megalomania [-10], Obsession [-5 or -10*], Overconfidence [-5*], Reputation [Varies], Secret [Varies], Selfish [-5*], Sense of Duty [Varies], or Workaholic [-5].

Primary Skills: Acting (A) IQ+2 [4]-14†; Diplomacy (H) IQ+1 [4]-13†; Fast-Talk (A) IQ+2 [4]-14†; Politics (A) IQ+2 [4]-14†; and Savoir-Faire (High Society) (E) IQ+3 [4]-15†.

Secondary Skills: 12 points chosen from among Crossbow and Knife, both (E) DX+1 [2]-11; Broadsword, Cloak, and Saber, all (A) DX [2]-10; Heraldry (A) IQ [2]-12; Leadership and Public Speaking, both (A) IQ+1 [2]-13†; Law (Local) (H) IQ-1 [2]-11; Intimidation (A) Will+1 [2]-13†; or Detect Lies (H) Per [2]-14†.

Background Skills: 3 points chosen from among Dancing (A) DX-1 [1]-9; Area Knowledge (Local) (E) IQ [1]-12; Writing (A) IQ-1 [1]-11; History (Local), Poisons/TL3, Strategy (Land or any), and Theology (Any), all (H) IQ-2 [1]-10; Carousing (E) HT+1 [1]-12†; or Sex Appeal (A) HT [1]-11†.

* Multiplied for self-control number; see p. B120.

† +1 from Smooth Operator.

Adventurers from Other Occupations

The templates in this chapter represent a range of character types who might well engage in adventures and who are well equipped for the task. However, other character types *could* become involved in such excitement, serving as PCs, especially in low-points games.

Alchemists: Alchemy is the nearest thing to chemistry in most of Ytarria, with a large dose of magical theory and occasionally confidence trickery as well. Most alchemists are small shopkeepers or wizards' assistants, but a few become involved in other matters. An alchemist may have not only Alchemy skill but also other medical, "scientific," and magical knowledge, and perhaps Fast-Talk or Holdout. Advantages could include Acute Taste and Smell, Resistant to Poison, Single-Minded, or Wealth (Comfortable); disadvantages could include Absent-Mindedness, Bad Smell, Curious, or Delusion ("I am very close to learning some great and profitable secrets!"). Gamers who want to use weird potions and exotic alchemical techniques should see ***GURPS Magic.***

Courier/Groom: Anyone competent at working with animals can be useful on adventures. "Grooms" are employed to look after stables in a castle, inn, or other large establishment; Animal Handling skill, and maybe Packing, are the key here. Couriers, on the other hand, focus on Riding skill, as they carry messages over long distances when magic isn't available. In some regions, a courier may need weapon skills; in many, couriers will have a level or so of Status, as trusted servants of the wealthy and powerful.

Peasants: Not all peasants are Heroes, but most will fight to defend their homes if they must. Laboring in the fields can lead to decent ST and HT, while farm tools can be wielded as weapons. For that matter, reasonable Per and Will are quite plausible.

Servants: Most high-Status characters employ personal servants, some of whom have useful abilities of their own. While "non-adventuring" skills such as Cooking, Housekeeping, and Savoir-Faire (Servant) are the requirements for the job, an entertaining servant character might add good ST or IQ, Common Sense, Unfazeable, Current Affairs, Fast-Talk, or Psychology.

Village Priests: Priests in Ytarria are never required to have overt supernatural abilities, and many are quiet and unassuming. However, a village priest may well try to help if his community is endangered or the church faces enemies. Most have decent IQ and fair levels in Area Knowledge, Public Speaking, and Theology (along with Clerical Investment, of course); a few, inspirations to the rest, have True Faith. Common disadvantages include Fanaticism, Pacifism, a Sense of Duty, and religious Vows.

Entertainer

50 points

While mystical bards (p. 203) wield uncanny powers, Yrth also has countless more mundane entertainers endeavoring to make what livings they can by whatever means seem safe. Some are sophisticated artists; others are mere rogues. They may be wanderers or permanent fixtures in a tavern or noble's court; few can count on any sort of special treatment, whatever their talent. All are painfully likely to become involved in adventures and intrigues, where their skills often prove remarkably useful.

Attributes: ST 10 [0]; DX 11 [20]; IQ 11 [20]; HT 10 [0].

Secondary Characteristics: Dmg 1d-2/1d; BL 20 lbs.; HP 10 [0]; Will 11 [0]; Per 11 [0]; FP 11 [0]; Basic Speed 5.25 [0]; Basic Move 5 [0].

Advantages: Charisma 1 [5], Musical Ability 1 [5], and 10 points chosen from among Acute Senses [2/level], Appearance (Attractive) [4], more Charisma [5/level], Fashion Sense [5], Honest Face [1], Language Talent [10], Languages (Any) [Varies], Musical Ability [5/level], Patron (Art-lover) [Varies], Penetrating Voice [1], Reputation (As talented entertainer) [Varies], Sensitive [5], Versatile [5], or Voice [10].

Disadvantages: -25 points chosen from among Chummy [-5] *or* Gregarious [-10], Code of Honor (Theatrical) [-5], Enemies (Rival artists or previous satire victims) [Varies], Impulsiveness [-10*], Jealousy [-10], Laziness [-10], Lecherousness [-15*], or Overconfidence [-5*].

Primary Skills: 8 points chosen from among Dancing (A) DX+1 [4]-12; Acrobatics (H) DX [4]-11; Acting, Group Performance (Any but Conducting), and Performance, all (A) IQ+1 [4]-12; Group Performance (Conducting) and Public Speaking, both (A) IQ+2 [4]-13†; Mimicry (any) (H) IQ [4]-11; Musical Instrument (Any) (H) IQ+1 [4]-12†; or Singing (E) HT+3 [4]-13†.

Secondary Skills: 4 points chosen from among Sleight of Hand (H) DX-1 [2]-10; Fast-Talk and Poetry, both (A) IQ [2]-11; History (Local) and Literature, both (H) IQ-1 [2]-10; or Musical Composition (H) IQ [2]-11†.

Background Skills: 3 points chosen from among Makeup/TL3 and Savoir-Faire (Any), both (E) IQ [1]-11; Politics, Streetwise, and Writing, all (A) IQ-1 [1]-10; Carousing (E) HT [1]-10; or Sex Appeal (A) HT-1 [1]-9.

* Multiplied for self-control number; see p. B120.

† +1 from either Charisma or Musical Ability.

Job Description

Prerequisites: One of Singing, Dancing, Performance, Acrobatics, or Musical Instrument at 13+.

Job Roll: Prerequisite skill-2. On critical failure, the audience throws eggs; you lose the current booking or have to leave town.

Monthly Pay: $50 × prerequisite skill. Adjusted for margin of success or failure.

Wealth Level: Average. Supports Status 0.

Freelance Wizard

150 points

Many Ytarrian wizards move from job to job as needed. Most prefer quiet lives, but some end up as adventurers. This template represents a very talented mage at the beginning of a long and no doubt profitable career.

Attributes: ST 9 [-10]; DX 11 [20]; IQ 14 [80]; HT 10 [0].

Secondary Characteristics: Dmg 1d-2/1d-1; BL 16 lbs.; HP 9 [0]; Will 14 [0]; Per 14 [0]; FP 10 [0]; Basic Speed 5.25 [0]; Basic Move 5 [0].

Advantages: Magery 3 [35], and 10 points chosen from among Acute Senses [2/level], Eidetic Memory [5] *or* Photographic Memory [10], Language Talent [10], Languages (Any, particularly Latin in Megalos or Arabic in Cardiel) [Varies], Patron (Mages' Guild; 6 or less) [8]‡, Sensitive [5], or Signature Gear (Staff or other magic item) [Varies].

Disadvantages: -25 points chosen from among Addiction (Tobacco) [-5], Bad Temper [-10*], Clueless [-10], Curious [-5*], Duty (Mages' Guild; 9 or less) [-5]‡, Enemy (Mages' Guild; 6 or less) [-15]‡, Fearfulness [-2/level], Jealousy [-10], Laziness [-10], Magic Susceptibility [-3/level], Megalomania [-10], Obsession (Acquiring magical power) [-5 or -10*], Overconfidence [-5*], Overweight [-1], Selfish [-5*], Trademark [-5, -10, or -15], Unfit [-5], or Vow (Never use black magic) [-5].

Primary Skills: Analyze Magic, Apportation, Counterspell, Deflect Missile, Detect Magic, Dispel Magic, Haste, Identify Spell, Ignite Fire, Itch, Lend Energy, Light, Recover Energy, Sense Foes, and Shield, all (H) [1]-15†; and Thaumatology (VH) IQ [1]-14†.

Secondary Skills: Alchemy/TL3 (VH) IQ-2 [2]-12; Occultism (A) IQ [2]-14; Staff (A) DX [2]-11; and *one* of the following sets of spells:

Air and Earth: Innate Attack (Beam) (E) DX+1 [2]-12; and Create Air, Earth to Air, Lightning, Purify Air, Seek Earth, Shape Air, Shape Earth, and Walk On Air, all (H) [1]-15†.

Body: Clumsiness, Deathtouch, Hinder, Itch, Lend Vitality, Pain, Paralyze Limb, Rooted Feet, Spasm, and Wither Limb, all (H) [1]-15†.

Empathy and Mind: Command, Daze, Foolishness, Forgetfulness, Hide Thoughts, Mass Daze, Mind-Reading, Sense Emotion, Sleep, and Truthsayer, all (H) [1]-15†.

Healing: Awaken, Lend Vitality, Minor Healing, Purify Air, Purify Water, and Seek Water, all (H) [1]-15†; and Great Healing and Major Healing, both (VH) [2]-15†.

Knowledge: Aura, Continual Light, Darkness, Mind-Reading, Seek Earth, Seek Water, Seeker, Sense Emotion, Trace, and Truthsayer, all (H) [1]-15†.

Water: Breathe Water, Create Air, Create Water, Destroy Water, Fog, Icy Weapon, Purify Air, Purify Water, Seek Water, and Shape Water, all (H) [1]-15†.

Background Skills: Accounting (H) IQ-2 [1]-12; Diplomacy (H) IQ-2 [1]-12; Merchant (A) IQ-1 [1]-13; Philosophy (Any) (H) IQ-2 [1]-12; Research (A) IQ-1 [1]-13; Savoir-Faire (Any) (E) IQ [1]-14; Speed-Reading (A) IQ-1 [1]-13; and Writing (A) IQ-1 [1]-13.

* Multiplied for self-control number; see p. B120.

† +3 from Magery.

‡ Note that if you take Enemy (Mages' Guild), you may not take Duty (To Mages' Guild) or Patron (Mages' Guild), unless the campaign features *rival* guilds.

Job Description

Prerequisites: A generally useful spell at 14+.

Job Roll: Prerequisite spell. On critical failure, gain a -1 Reputation locally as an incompetent, or roll on *Critical Spell Failure Table* (p. B236).

Monthly Pay: $125 × prerequisite spell. Adjusted for margin of success or failure.

Wealth Level: Comfortable. Supports Status 1.

Healer

150 points

Healers – also called hedgewitches, herbalists, or physickers – are welcome almost everywhere. Their minor magical talents are most effective when supplemented with mundane skills. Note that many common village herbalists lack magical powers; this template represents an exceptionally good healer.

Attributes: ST 9 [-10]; DX 10 [0]; IQ 13 [60]; HT 11 [10].

Secondary Characteristics: Dmg 1d-2/1d-1; BL 16 lbs.; HP 9 [0]; Will 14 [5]; Per 14 [5]; FP 11 [0]; Basic Speed 5.25 [0]; Basic Move 5 [0].

Advantages: Healer 2 [20], Magery 1 [15], and 15 points chosen from among Charisma [5/level], Favors (From grateful patients) [Varies], High Manual Dexterity [5/level], Less Sleep [2/level], Patron (Noble employer) [Varies], Reputation (Selfless healer, or any similar) [Varies], Resistant to Disease +3 [3], Sensitive [5], *or* Empathy [15], Single-Minded [5], or Social Regard (Respected) [5/level].

Disadvantages: -15 points chosen from among Bad Temper [-10*], Charitable [-15*], Code of Honor (Professional) [-5], Delusion (Inaccurate medical theory, such as "four humors") [-10], Easy to Read [-10], Odious Personal Habit (Tactlessness or any) [-5, -10, or -15]§, Pacifism (Any) [Varies], Sense of Duty (Any) [-5, -10, or -15], Stubbornness [-5], or Truthfulness [-5*]§.

Primary Skills: Diagnosis/TL3 (H) IQ+2 [4]-15†; Herb Lore/TL3 (VH) IQ-1 [4]-12; and Physician/TL3 (H) IQ+2 [4]-15†. Also, Awaken, Lend Energy, Lend Vitality, and Minor Healing, all (H) IQ-1 [1]-12‡; and Major Healing (VH) IQ-1 [2]-12‡.

Secondary Skills: Alchemy (VH) IQ-2 [2]-11; Diplomacy (H) IQ-1 [2]-12; Pharmacy/TL3 IQ+1 [2]-14†; Physiology/TL3 (Own race) IQ+1 [2]-14†; Psychology IQ+1 [2]-14†; and Surgery/TL3 (VH) IQ [2]-13†. Also, Aura, Detect Magic, No-Smell, Purify Air, Purify Water, Seek Water, Sense Emotion, and Sense Foes, all (H) IQ-1 [1]-12‡.

Background Skills: Area Knowledge (Local) (E) IQ [1]-13; Biology/TL3 (VH) IQ-3 [1]-10; Hypnotism (H) IQ-2 [1]-11; Naturalist (H) IQ-2 [1]-11; Poisons/TL3 (H) IQ-2 [1]-11; Research/TL3 (A) IQ-1 [1]-12; and Veterinary/TL3 (H) IQ [1]-13†.

* Multiplied for self-control number; see p. B120.

† +2 from Healer.

‡ +1 from Magery.

§ OPH (Tactlessness) and Truthfulness overlap; characters may not have both.

Job Description

Prerequisites: Physician 14+.

Job Roll: Prerequisite skill. On critical failure, patient dies, pay 1 month's income to angry family.

Monthly Pay: $100 × prerequisite skill. Adjusted for margin of success or failure.

Wealth Level: Comfortable. Supports Status 1.

Knight-Errant

150 points

Knights are well-trained upper-class warriors. Most belong to a chivalric order or swear fealty to a lord, but some are footloose and looking for employment or adventure. This template encompasses Christian knights, Sahudese samurai, and Muslim ghazis.

Formal knighthood requires taking on duties and vows, often very strict ones. In return, a knight gets the support of his lord or order, and social status. A good knight will have social skills as well as combat abilities, and will be knowledgeable in local law in order to mete out justice as his lord would wish. Historically, knighthood was available only to men, but on Yrth, Caithness grants knighthood to women, and some Sahudese samurai are female.

Attributes: ST 13 [30]; DX 13 [60]; IQ 10 [0]; HT 12 [20].

Secondary Characteristics: Dmg 1d/2d-1; BL 34 lbs.; HP 13 [0]; Will 10 [0]; Per 10 [0]; FP 12 [0]; Basic Speed 6.25 [0]; Basic Move 6 [0].

Advantages: Status 2 [10], and 15 points chosen from among Born War-Leader [5/level], Combat Reflexes [15], Fearlessness [2/level], Fit [5] *or* Very Fit [15], High Pain Threshold [10], Patron (Liege lord or knightly order) [Varies], Reputation (As a do-gooder: +2; From commoners: Large Class; All the Time) [5], Signature Gear (Father's sword or other) [Varies], additional Status [5/level], or Wealth (Comfortable) [10]. (Wealth and Status may be bought as Potential Advantages (Heir) for half cost. See p. B33.)

Disadvantages: -20 points chosen from among Bloodlust [-10*], Callous [-5], Code of Honor (Arab, Chivalry, Sahudese, or other) [-5, -10, or -15], Duty (To liege lord or order; 9 or less) [-5], Fanaticism [-15], Intolerance (Religious, Racial, or National) [Variable, but likely -10], Jealousy [-10], Overconfidence [-5*], Selfish [-5*], Sense of Duty (To Megalans, Muslims, commoners, or other large group) [-10], Social Stigma (Disowned) [-5 or -10], or Vow [-5, -10, or -15].

Primary Skills: Riding (Horses) (A) DX+1 [4]-14. Also, 16 points chosen from among Shield (E) DX+2 [4]-15; or Axe/Mace, Bow, Broadsword, Lance, Shortsword, Two-Handed Axe/Mace, Two-Handed Sword, and Wrestling, all (A) DX+1 [4]-14. (Christian characters will usually take Axe/Mace, Broadsword, Shield, and Lance; Muslims may add Bow. Sahudese characters will usually take Bow, Broadsword, Shortsword, and Two-Handed Sword.)

Secondary Skills: 10 points chosen from among Judo (H) DX-1 [2]-12; Area Knowledge (Local) and

Savoir-Faire, both (E) IQ+1 [2]-11; Leadership (A) IQ [2]-10; Law (Local) (H) IQ-1 [2]-9; or additional Melee Weapons skills.

Background Skills: 5 points chosen from among Dancing (A) DX-1 [1] -12; Armoury/TL3 (Body Armor), Armoury/TL3 (Melee Weapons), Heraldry, Poetry, and Politics, all (A) IQ-1 [1]-9; Theology (Any) (H) IQ-2 [1]-8; or Carousing (E) HT [1] -12.

* Multiplied for self-control number; see p. B120.

Martial Artist

150 points

In Ytarria, it is mainly the Sahudese who study unarmed combat. This template specifically represents a fighter from this background. It is also largely realistic; for a more powerful character with supernatural abilities, see the box on *Masters of the Martial Arts,* p. 210.

Attributes: ST 11 [10]; DX 13 [60]; IQ 10 [0]; HT 11 [10].

Secondary Characteristics: Dmg 1d-1/1d+1; BL 24 lbs.; HP 11 [0]; Will 12 [10]; Per 10 [0]; FP 11 [0]; Basic Speed 6 [0]; Basic Move 6 [0].

Advantages: 20 points chosen from among Acute Senses [2/level], Ambidexterity [5], Combat Reflexes [15], Daredevil [15], Fit [5] *or* Very Fit [15], Flexibility [5] *or* Double-Jointed [15], or High Pain Threshold [10].

Disadvantages: -20 points chosen from among Bad Temper [-10*], Bully [-10*], Code of Honor (Sahudese, Pirate's, or any similar) [-5, -10, or -15], Obsession (Become a master) [-10*], Overconfidence [-5*], Pacifism (Any except Total Nonviolence) [-5, -10, or -15], or Vow (Use no weapons) [-15].

Primary Skills: Judo (H) DX+1 [8]-14, Karate (H) DX+1 [8]-14, Savoir-Faire (Dojo) (E) IQ [1]-10.

Techniques: Arm Lock (A) Judo+2 [2] -16, Back Kick (H) Karate-3 [2]-11, Choke Hold (H) Judo-1 [2]-13, Disarming (H) Karate+1 [2]-15, Elbow Strike (A) Karate [2]-14, Feint (H) Judo+1 [2]-15, Ground Fighting (H) Judo-3 [2]-11, Jump Kick (H) Karate-3 [2]-11, Kicking (H) Karate-1 [2]-13, Knee Strike (A) Karate [1]-14.

Secondary Skills: Acrobatics (H) DX [4]-13 and Jumping (E) DX+2 [4] -15. Also, 12 points chosen from among Jitte/Sai, Staff, and Tonfa, all (A) DX+1 [4]-14; Flail (H) DX [4]-13; Leadership and Teaching, both (A) IQ+1 [4]-11; or Intimidation (A) Will+1 [4]-13.

Background Skills: 4 points chosen from among Knife (E) DX+1 [2] -14, Stealth (A) DX [2]-13, Tactics (H) IQ-1 [2]-9, Meditation (H) Will -1 [2]-11, or Body Language (A) Per [2]-10.

* Multiplied for self-control number; see p. B120.

Knightly Lenses

The following lenses may be applied to the knight-errant template to represent membership in specific knightly orders. Note that "poverty" for the religious orders merely means they don't keep *excess* wealth; a knight's horse, armor, and weapons are usually worth quite a bit.

Hospitaller (-10 points): Patron (Hospitallers; 9 or less) [15]; Duty (To Hospitallers; 12 or less) [-10]; Reputation (Dour fighters and enemies of the infidel; +2 from Christians (large class), -3 from all others; all the time) [-5]; Vow (Chastity) [-5]; Vow (Poverty) [-5]. A Hospitaller with Magery *must* also take Vow (Refrain from using magic) [-10], making the total -20 points. (All Hospitallers take an oath not to use magic, but it's only worth points if it is actually a disadvantage.) Hospitallers will often have Fanaticism or Intolerance (Racial, religious, or both), but they're not universal.

Knight of St. George of the Dragon (+5 points): Patron (Order of St. George; 9 or less) [15]; Reputation (Defender of the Church of Caithness; +2 from Caithnesser Christians (large class, all the time) [5]; Duty (To the Knights of St. George; 9 or less) [-5]; Vow (Chastity) [-5]; Vow (Poverty) [-5]. Code of Honor (Chivalry) is quite common in this order.

Knight of the Stone (+15 points): Patron (Order of the Stone; 9 or less) [15]; Reputation (Champions of justice; +2; From Caithnessers loyal to the crown, all the time) [5]; Duty (To the Knights of the Stone; 9 or less) [-5]. A Sense of Duty (To Caithnessers loyal to the crown) or Code of Honor (Chivalry) are very common, but not required. The Duty may be increased for knights serving in the order's chapter-house, or reduced for "retired" or honorary members.

Templar (-5 points): Patron (Templars; 9 or less) [15]; Duty (To Templars; 9 or less) [-5]; Reputation (Enemies of the infidel; +2 from Christians (large class), -3 from all others, all the time) [-5]; Vow (Chastity) [-5]; Vow (Poverty) [-5].

Mercenary

150 points

Mercenaries are warriors for hire. Some are loners; others belong to organized bands. They favor weapon skills; most have one or two preferred forms but will often have other specialties. A mercenary may also be a spy, an assassin, a tracker, or a healer.

Attributes: ST 11 [10]; DX 13 [60]; IQ 11 [20]; HT 11 [10].

Secondary Characteristics: Dmg 1d-1/1d+1; BL 24 lbs.; HP 11 [0]; Will 11 [0]; Per 11 [0]; FP 11 [0]; Basic Speed 6 [0]; Basic Move 6 [0].

Advantages: Combat Reflexes [15], and 15 points chosen from among Acute Senses [2/level], Born War-Leader [5/level], Danger Sense [15], Fearlessness [2/level], Fit [5] *or* Very Fit [15], Hard to Kill [2/level], Hard to Subdue [2/level], High Pain Threshold [10], Military Rank [5/level], Night Vision [1/level], Patron (Current Employer or Guild) [Varies], Peripheral Vision [15], Rapid Healing [5] *or* Very Rapid Healing [15], or Wealth (Comfortable) [10].

Disadvantages: -20 points chosen from among Berserk [-10*], Bloodlust [-10*], Bully [-10*], Callous [-5], Code of Honor (Stays Bought, Pirate's, or Soldier's) [-5 or -10], Duty (To current employer) [Varies], Enemy [Varies], Flashbacks [Varies], Greed [-15*], Incurious [-5*], Intolerance (Religious, Racial, or any) [-5 or -10], On the Edge [-15*], Overconfidence [-5*], Sense of Duty (Any) [Varies], Stubbornness [-5], or Truthfulness [-5*].

Primary Skills: Brawling (E) DX+2 [4]-15; Fast-Draw (Primary weapon) (E) DX+3 [4]-16†; Shield (E) DX+2 [4]-15; Soldier/TL3 (A) IQ [4]-12; *either* Crossbow (E) DX+2 [4]-15 *or* Bow (A) DX+1 [4]-14; and *either* Broadsword (A) DX+1 [4]-14, *or* 4 points in another Melee Weapon skill.

Secondary Skills: Armoury/TL3 (Body Armor) (A) IQ [2]-11; Armoury/TL3 (Melee Weapons) (A) IQ [2]-11; Hiking (A) HT [2]-11; Riding (Equines) (A) DX [2]-13; Tactics (H) IQ-1 [2]-10; and 2 points in another Melee Weapon skill.

Background Skills: 4 points chosen from among Wrestling (A) DX-1 [1]-12; Gambling, Leadership, and Streetwise, all (A) IQ-1 [1]-10; Strategy (Land) (H) IQ-2 [1]-9; Carousing (E) HT [1]-11; or Running (A) HT-1 [1]-10.

* Multiplied for self-control number; see p. B120.

† +1 from Combat Reflexes.

Job Description

Prerequisites: Three combat skills at 14+.

Job Roll: Worst prerequisite skill. On critical failure, 3d damage.

Monthly Pay: $50 × best prerequisite skill.

Wealth Level: Average. Supports Status 0.

Mercenary Captain Job Description

A skilled mercenary who fills leadership positions.

Prerequisites: Three combat skills at 14+, Leadership 12+, Strategy 12+.

Job Roll: Worst of Leadership and Strategy. On critical failure, lose two month's income, take 2d damage.

Monthly Pay: $120 × best of Leadership and Strategy.

Wealth Level: Comfortable. Supports Status 1.

Masters of the Martial Arts

For martial artists who tap into their personal chi to perform feats that border on magic, add this lens to the Martial Artist Template (note that this makes it a *250-point* template).

Exotic Martial Artist

+100 points

Attributes: +2 to IQ [40].

Advantages: Trained by a Master [30], and 20 points chosen from among Crushing Attack 1d or 2d (Chi blast; Costs Fatigue: 2 FP, -10%; Double Knockback, +20%; Reduced Range, ×1/2, -10%) [5 or 10], Danger Sense [15], Enhanced Block [5], Enhanced Dodge [15], Enhanced Parry (Bare Hands) [5], Enhanced Move (Ground) [20], Hard to Kill [2/level], Hard to Subdue [2/level], Higher Purpose (Become the best) [5], Longevity [2], Recovery [10], Super Jump 1 or 2 [10 or 20], Temperature Tolerance [1/level], or Wild Talent 1 [20].

Skills: 10 points chosen from among Innate Attack (Projectile) (E) DX+2 [4]-15*; Immovable Stance, Push, and Throwing Art, all (H) DX-1 [2]-12; Breaking Blow and Pressure Points, both (H) IQ-1 [2]-11; Kiai (H) HT-1 [2]-10; Mental Strength (E) Will+1 [2]-15; Power Blow (H) Will-1 [2]-13; or Blind Fighting (VH) Per-2 [2]-10.

* You may not take the Innate Attack skill unless you take the Crushing Attack advantage.

Merchant

110 points

A merchant may be a street peddler, a wealthy shop owner, or a caravan-master who doesn't see the same city twice in a year. Merchants may also be part-time explorers looking for new trade routes and unique goods. The merchant's creed is "Buy low, sell high."

Attributes: ST 10 [0]; DX 10 [0]; IQ 13 [60]; HT 10 [0].

Secondary Characteristics: Dmg 1d-2/1d; BL 20 lbs.; HP 10 [0]; Will 14 [5]; Per 13 [0]; FP 10 [0]; Basic Speed 5 [0]; Basic Move 5 [0].

Advantages: Business Acumen 2 [20], and 20 points chosen from among Administrative Rank [5/level], more levels of Business Acumen [10/level], Charisma [5/level], Contacts [Varies], Cultural Adaptability [10] *or* Xeno-Adaptability [20], Eidetic Memory [5] *or* Photographic Memory [10], Honest Face [1], Independent Income [1/level], Indomitable [15], Language Talent [10], Languages (Any) [Varies], Lightning Calculator [2], Patron (Merchant's Guild) [Varies], Reputation (As honest merchant) [Varies], Sensitive [5] *or* Empathy [15], Voice [10], or Wealth (Comfortable) [10] *or* Wealth (Wealthy) [20].

Disadvantages: -20 points chosen from among Code of Honor (Professional) [-5], Compulsive Behavior (Haggling) [-5*], Enemy (Rival merchant or merchant house; usually as a Watcher or Rival) [Varies], Greed [-15*], Miserliness [-10*], Overconfidence [-5*], Pacifism (Any) [-5, -10, or -15], Reputation (As dishonest merchant) [Varies], Selfish [-5*], Stubbornness [-5], or Workaholic [-5].

Primary Skills: Accounting (H) IQ+2 [4]-15† and Merchant (A) IQ+3 [4]-16†.

Secondary Skills: Administration (A) IQ+2 [2]-15†; Area Knowledge

(Any) (E) IQ+1 [2]-14; Detect Lies (H) Per-1 [2]-12; Finance (H) IQ+1 [2]-14†; and Propaganda/TL3 (A) IQ+2 [2]-15†.

Background Skills: 7 points chosen from among Acting, Fast-Talk, Holdout, Politics, and Streetwise, all (A) IQ-1 [1]-12; Gambling (A) IQ+1 [1]-14†; Diplomacy and Law, both (Any) (H) IQ-2 [1]-11; Economics and Market Analysis, both (H) IQ [1]-13†; Carousing (E) HT [1]-10; or skills relevant to the merchant's specific trade (e.g., a point in Broadsword for an arms dealer).

* Multiplied for self-control number; see p. B120.

† +2 from Business Acumen.

Job Description

Prerequisite: Merchant at 14+.

Job Roll: Prerequisite skill-1. On critical failure, lose one month's income due to spoiled merchandise, unlucky deals, etc.

Monthly Pay: $50 × prerequisite skill. Adjusted for margin of success or failure.

Wealth Level: Average. Supports Status 0.

Master Merchant Job Description

Prerequisite: Merchant at 16+.

Job Roll: Prerequisite skill. On critical failure, lose two month's income.

Monthly Pay: $200×prerequisite skill. Adjusted for margin of success or failure.

Wealth Level: Wealthy. Supports Status 1.

Michaelite

150 points

The most prominent "crime solvers" in Ytarria are the Michaelites (p. 64), though similar organizations are beginning to appear in Muslim lands. Though theirs was originally a semi-religious order, Michaelites do *not* necessarily need Clerical Investment, particularly in Cardiel.

Attributes: ST 11 [10]; DX 12 [40]; IQ 12 [40]; HT 11 [10].

Secondary Characteristics: Dmg 1d -1/1d+1; BL 24 lbs.; HP 11 [0]; Will 12 [0]; Per 14 [10]; FP 11 [0]; Basic Speed 5.75 [0]; Basic Move 5 [0].

Advantages: Legal Enforcement Powers [10], Patron (Michaelite Order; 9 or less) [15], and 15 points chosen from among Absolute Direction [5], Acute Senses [2/level], Administrative Rank [5/level], Charisma [5/level], Clerical Investment [5]; Combat Reflexes [15], Contacts (Street) [Varies], Danger Sense [15], Eidetic Memory [5] *or* Photographic Memory [10], Fearlessness [2/level], Intuition [15], Night Vision [1/level], or Sensitive [5] *or* Empathy [15].

Disadvantages: Duty (To Michaelites; Quite Often: 12 or less) [-10], and *one* of the following options:

Megalan Michaelite: Reputation (Dangerous inquisitors; -2 from everyone; All the time) [-10]; and -10 points chosen from among Intolerance (Religious) [-10], Overconfidence [-5*], Sense of

Other Jobs

These are many potential occupations in Ytarria. Some of the jobs listed below might be suited to adventurers, but mostly they represent careers for ordinary folk.

Artisan

Prerequisites: Any craft skill at 12+.

Job Roll: Prerequisite skill-2. On critical failure, no income for the month.

Monthly Pay: $60 × prerequisite skill. Adjusted for margin of success or failure.

Wealth Level: Average. Supports Status 0.

Beggar

Prerequisites: Panhandling at 12+.

Job Roll: Prerequisite skill. On critical failure, beaten or jailed for no cause.

Monthly Pay: $10 × prerequisite skill. Adjusted for margin of success or failure.

Wealth Level: Poor. Supports Status -2.

Gambler

Prerequisites: Gambling and Streetwise at 12+.

Job Roll: Gambling-2. On critical failure, lose everything, or caught cheating.

Monthly Pay: $30 × Gambling skill. Adjusted for margin of success or failure.

Wealth Level: Struggling. Supports Status -1.

Laborer

Prerequisites: ST 11+.

Job Roll: Worst of ST and HT. On critical failure, on-the-job injury, 1d damage, and no income for a month while you heal.

Monthly Pay: $120.

Wealth Level: Poor. Supports Status -2.

Priest

Prerequisites: Clerical Investment, Public Speaking 10+, Religious Ritual 12+, Theology 12+.

Job Roll: Public Speaking. On critical failure, congregation becomes unhappy; gain a temporary -2 Reputation among them and your immediate superiors for 1d months.

Monthly Pay: $1,200.

Wealth Level: Comfortable. Supports Status 1.

Duty (Fellow Michaelites or Christians) [-5 or -10], or Stubbornness [-5].

Caithnesser or Cardien Michaelite: Reputation (Honest law enforcers; -4 from criminals (large group), +3 from everyone *but* criminals; All the time) [0]; and -20 points chosen from among Intolerance (Religious, Racial, or other)† [-5 or -10], Overconfidence [-5*], Secret (Corrupt or other) [Varies], Sense of Duty (Fellow Michaelites, Christians, honest citizens, or other) [Varies], and Stubbornness [-5], or Vow (Not to abuse position) [-5].

Primary Skills: Area Knowledge (Local) (E) IQ+2 [4]-14; Criminology/TL3 (A) IQ+1 [4]-13; Detect Lies (H) Per [4]-14; Shield (E) DX+2 [4]-14; and *either* Broadsword *or* Shortsword, both (A) DX+1 [4]-13.

Secondary Skills: 6 points chosen from among Brawling (E) DX+1 [2]-13; Interrogation and Streetwise, both (A) IQ [2]-12; Diplomacy and Law, both (H) IQ-1 [2]-11; or Search (A) Per [2]-14.

Background Skills: 4 points chosen from among First Aid/TL3 and Savoir-Faire, both (E) IQ [1]-12; Shadowing (A) IQ-1 [1]-11; Forensics/TL3, Psychology, and Theology (Appropriate religion), all (H) IQ-2 [1]-10; or Intimidation (A) Will-1 [1]-11.

* Multiplied for self-control number; see p. B120.

† Intolerance (Religious) in a Michaelite is strongly frowned upon in Cardiel.

Mystic

110 points

Mystics may be Sufis, hermits, weird scholars, or anything similar. Through study, meditation, and physical deprivation, they sometimes acquire strange powers. Note that many mystical powers require that the character have specific Disadvantages to support the Pact limitation.

Attributes: ST 10 [0]; DX 11 [20]; IQ 12 [40]; HT 12 [20].

Secondary Characteristics: Dmg 1d-2/1d; BL 20 lbs.; HP 10 [0]; Will 14 [10]; Per 12 [0]; FP 12 [0]; Basic Speed 5.75 [0]; Basic Move 5 [0].

Advantages: 35 points chosen from among Acute Senses [2/level], Animal Empathy [5], Blessed [Varies], Charisma [5/level], Claim to Hospitality [Varies], Close to Heaven [5/level], Eidetic Memory [5] *or* Photographic Memory [10], Fearlessness [2/level], Fit [5] *or* Very Fit [15], Flexibility [5] *or* Double-Jointed [15], High Pain Threshold [10], Less Sleep [2/level], Perfect Balance [15], Rapid Healing [5] *or* Very Rapid Healing [15], Reduced Consumption [2/level], Reputation (Respected mystic) [Varies], Resistant to Disease +3 [3], Resistant to Poison +3 [5], Sensitive [5] *or* Empathy [15], Single-Minded [5], Social Regard (Venerated) [5/level], Temperature Tolerance [1/level], Trained by a Master [30], Unfazeable [15], Voice [10], or appropriate powers listed under *Mystic Lenses*, p. 213.

Disadvantages: -35 points in disadvantages, one of which *must* be Disciplines of Faith (Asceticism, Monasticism, Mysticism, or similar) [-10 or -15]. Choose the remainder from among Absent-Mindedness [-15], Bad Temper [-10*], Charitable [-15*], Fanaticism [-15], Honesty [-10*], Loner [-5*], Miserliness [-10*], Pacifism (Any except Reluctant Killer) [-10 or -15], Reputation (Weird, heretical, or any similar) [Varies], Selfless [-5*], Sense of Duty (Any) [Varies], Skinny [-5], Stubbornness [-5], Truthfulness [-5*], Vow [Varies], or Wealth (Struggling) [-10], Wealth (Poor) [-15], *or* Wealth (Dead Broke) [-25].

Primary Skills: Meditation (H) Will [4]-14; and *either* Philosophy (Any) *or* Theology (Own religion), both (H) IQ [4]-12.

Secondary Skills: 8 points chosen from among Staff (A) DX [2]-11; Judo (H) DX-1 [2]-10; Teaching and Writing, both (A) IQ [2]-12; Survival (Any) (A) Per [2]-12; Religious Ritual (Own religion) (H) IQ-1 [2]-11; Detect Lies (H) Per-1 [2]-11; or whichever of Philosophy (Any) and Theology (Own religion) (both (H) IQ-1 [2]-11) wasn't taken as a primary skill.

Background Skills: 4 points chosen from among Poetry and Research/TL3, both (A) IQ-1 [1]-11; Musical Instrument (Any inexpensive instrument) (H) IQ-2 [1]-10; Singing (E) HT [1]-12; or Hiking (A) HT-1 [1]-11.

* Multiplied for self-control number; see p. B120.

Northern Barbarian

150 points

Northmen from the Nomad Lands often come south seeking plunder, adventure, or even knowledge. These hardy wilderness warriors have a lower TL than most of the continent, but they are potent fighters.

Attributes: ST 14 [40]; DX 12 [40]; IQ 10 [0]; HT 13 [30].

Secondary Characteristics: Dmg 1d/2d; BL 39 lbs.; HP 14 [0]; Will 10 [0]; Per 12 [10]; FP 13 [0]; Basic Speed 6.25 [0]; Basic Move 6 [0].

Advantages: Outdoorsman 2 [20], and 15 points chosen from among Animal Empathy [5], Combat Reflexes [15], Danger Sense [15], Fit [5] *or* Very Fit [15], High Pain Threshold [10], Languages (Spoken only, appropriate to lands most visited) [Varies], Magic Resistance [2/level], Night Vision [1/level], more levels of Outdoorsman [10/level], Rapid Healing [5] *or* Very Rapid Healing [15], Resistant to Disease +3 [3], Resistant to Poison +3 [5], or Temperature Tolerance [1/level].

Disadvantages: Illiteracy (in native tongue) [-3], Low TL -1 [-5], and -20 points chosen from among Bloodlust [-10*], Bully [-10*], Callous [-5], Code of Honor (Northman's) [-10], Delusions (About how the civilized world works) [-5, -10, or -15], Odious Personal Habits [-5, -10, or -15], Overconfidence [-5*], or Social Stigma (Barbarian) [-10].

Primary Skills: Broadsword (A) DX+1 [4]-13, Stealth (A) DX+1 [4] -13 and Survival (Mountains) (A) Per+3 [4]-15†.

Secondary Skills: Brawling (E) DX+1 [2]-13, Tracking (A) Per+2 [2]-14†, and Weather Sense (A) IQ [2]-10.

Mystic Lenses

A mystical discipline is a set of advantages students of a particular "school" of thought may buy. (Schools are often not literal centers of learning. See p. 27 for more on this.) Disciplines normally have a Pact limitation (p. B113) linked to significant Disciplines of Faith (p. B132). To build a practitioner of one of these disciplines, begin with the Mystic template (p. 212).

An'Fo'Tama Monks

These monks are often competent martial artists; some have the Trained by a Master advantage and skills such as Breaking Blow or Light Walk. An'Fo'Tama monks in the monastery itself are subject to Disciplines of Faith (Monasticism); those who leave to wander the world replace this with Disciplines of Faith (Mysticism) since they have to compensate for greater distractions. They must *also* take a Major Vow to use force only to defend themselves or others from immediate harm. This resembles Pacifism but is a matter of personal discipline rather than emotional impulse.

An'Fo'Tamans cannot have Wealth greater than Struggling except in unusual circumstances. A monk who receives a legacy will guard it until satisfied he has found a good use for it, but he will not spend it on himself.

These monks must have a Will of at least 12. If they take mental disadvantages which permit a self-control roll, these *must* have a self-control number of 12 or 15; anything less indicates too little self-control.

Abilities taught by the monastery are bought as advantages with the limitation Pact (Disciplines of Faith *and* Vow, -20%). Those known are as follows:

Recognizing the Illusion of Fire: Damage Resistance with Pact and Limited (Burning, -40%). *2 points per level.*

Recognizing the Illusion of Pain: High Pain Threshold with the Pact limitation. *8 points.*

Command of the Blood: Injury Tolerance (No Blood) with Pact and Accessibility (Must be conscious, -10%). (The monk does not actually have no blood, but can control his circulation in very fine detail.) *4 points.*

Reading the Akashic Record: By mentally accessing past-life memories or collective racial wisdom, the monk can briefly exhibit skills or talents in which he has never been trained. Modular Abilities (Cosmic) with Pact and Preparation Required (1 minute, -20%). *6 points per point of abilities.*

Recognizing the Illusion of Wounds: Regeneration (Slow) with Pact and Accessibility (Must be conscious, -10%). *7 points.*

The Order of Friedrich

Friedrichites are defined by their disdain for the material world; all have Disciplines of Faith (Asceticism) and cannot have Wealth greater than Poor. Friedrichite abilities are bought as advantages with the limitation Pact (Disciplines of Faith, -15%). The following have been demonstrated:

The Gaze of the Prophets: Charisma 4 bought with the Pact limitation. *17 points.*

Surpassing the Need for Food: Doesn't Eat or Drink with the Pact limitation. Friedrichites only use this in emergencies; depending on it is hubristic, a denial of God's order of things. *9 points.*

Surpassing the Need for Sleep: Doesn't Sleep with the Pact limitation. Again, Friedrichites with this power do not use it frequently, although they sleep much less than other humans. *17 points.*

Transcending Matter: A few Friedrichites are so detached from the real world they can ignore the solidity of matter itself. This is Insubstantiality with Can Carry Objects (No Encumbrance) and Pact. *76 points.*

Disdaining Sorcery: Magic Resistance 10 with the Pact limitation. *17 points.*

Blessed Healing: Regeneration (Slow or Regular) with the Pact limitation. *9 or 22 points.*

The Blessed Step: Walk on Liquid with the Pact limitation. *13 points.*

Transcending Distance: Another rare ability, regarded by Friedrichites as a sacred blessing; Warp with Pact and Preparation Required (1 minute, -20%), indicating need for intense prayer and meditation beforehand, and optionally one or more levels of the Reliable enhancement. *65 points, +5 per level of Reliable.*

Julnari Dervishes

A Julnari must take not only Disciplines of Faith (Mysticism) but also a Minor Vow always to tell the truth as he sees it. This is not Truthfulness; a Julnari might be able to lie fluently but sees this *intellectually* as utterly wrong. Such a character must also have the skills Poetry and *either* Musical Instrument (flute or lute) *or* Singing, both at 12+. They usually have a Claim to Hospitality from other Julnaris, worth 3 points. The order is widespread in Muslim lands but few in number.

Julnaris can use advantages bought with the limitation Pact (Disciplines of Faith *and* Vow, -15%) and usually with other limitations reflecting the need to enter a meditative state beforehand. Known examples are:

Knowledge of the Path: Absolute Direction with Pact and Preparation Required (1 minute, -20%). *4 points.*

Knowledge of Hidden Truths: Clairsentience with the Pact limitation, and optionally Increased Range. *43 points, +5 points/level of Increased Range.*

Superior Judgment: Intuition with the Pact limitation. *13 points.*

Knowledge of the Unseen World: Medium with Pact and Preparation Required (1 minute, -20%). *7 points.*

Knowledge of Another's Truth: Mind Probe with Pact and Preparation Required (1 minute, -20%). *13 points.*

Knowledge of Omens: Oracle with the Pact limitation. *13 points.*

Sight Without Distance: Telescopic Vision 4 with the Pact limitation. *17 points.*

Background Skills: 5 points chosen from among Knife (E) DX [1]-12; Throwing and Wrestling, both (A) DX-1 [1]-11; First Aid/TL2 (E) IQ [1]-10; Camouflage (E) IQ+2 [1] -12†; Animal Handling (any) and Armoury/TL2 (Melee Weapons), both (A) IQ-1 [1]-9; Fishing (E) Per+2 [1]-14†; Navigation/TL2 (Land) (A) IQ+1 [1]-11†; Mimicry (Animal Sounds) and Naturalist, both (H) IQ [1]-10†; Swimming (E) HT [1]-13; Survival (other) (A) Per+1 [1]-13†; or other Melee Weapon skills.

* Multiplied for self-control number; see p. B120.

† +2 from Outdoorsman.

Peasant Hero

75 points

While many of the nobility might deny it, some of Ytarria's greatest heroes have come from humble roots. This template represents a young man or woman, fresh off the farm and caught up in adventure.

Attributes: ST 12 [20]; DX 11 [20]; IQ 10 [0]; HT 12 [20].

Secondary Characteristics: Dmg 1d-1/1d+2; BL 29 lbs.; HP 12 [0]; Will 11 [5]; Per 11 [5]; FP 11 [0]; Basic Speed 5.75 [0]; Basic Move 5 [0].

Advantages: 15 points chosen from among Acute Senses [2/level], Animal Empathy [5], Animal Friend [5/level], Charisma [5/level], Destiny [5, 10, or 15], Fearlessness [2/level], Fit [5] *or* Very Fit [15], Green Thumb [5/level], High Pain Threshold [10], Night Vision [1/level], Pitiable [5], Plant Empathy [5], or Rapid Healing [5] *or* Very Rapid Healing [15].

Disadvantages: Wealth (Struggling) [-10]; and -25 points chosen from among Charitable [-15*], Chummy [-5] *or* Gregarious [-10], Clueless [-10], Confused [-10*], Curious [-5*], Delusions (About how the world works) [Varies], Easy to Read [-10], Enemy (Former liege) [Varies], Gullibility [-10*], Ham-Fisted [-5 or -10], Honesty [-10*], Odious Personal Habits (Raised in a barn) [Varies], Overconfidence [-5*], Secret (Low birth, runaway serf, or other) [Varies], Semi-Literacy (In native tongue) [-2] *or* Illiteracy (In native tongue) [-3], Sense of Duty (Any) [Varies], Shyness [-5, -10, or -20], Status -1 [-5], Truthfulness [-5*], or Xenophilia [-10*].

Primary Skills: Animal Handling (Equines) (A) IQ+1 [4]-11; Farming/TL3 (A) IQ+1 [4]-11; and Hiking (A) HT+1 [4]-13.

Secondary Skills: *One* of Polearm, Two-Handed Axe/Mace, and Whip, all (A) DX [2]-11; *and* 6 points chosen from among Brawling and Leatherworking, both (E) DX+1 [2]-12; Riding (Equines) (A) DX [2]-11; Area Knowledge (Home Environs) and Carpentry, both (E) IQ+1 [2]-11; Fast-Talk and Weather Sense, both (A) IQ [2]-10; Naturalist and Veterinary/TL3, both (H) IQ-1 [2]-9; Herb Lore/TL3 (VH) IQ-2 [2]-8; Lifting (A) HT [2] -12; or Survival (Home environs) (A) Per [2]-11.

Background Skills: 5 points chosen from among First Aid/TL3, Gardening, and Masonry, all (E) IQ [1]-10; Packing, Smith/TL3 (any), and Teamster (Equines), all (A) IQ -1 [1]-9; Carousing (E) HT [1]-12; or Fishing and Scrounging, both (E) Per [1]-11.

* Multiplied for self-control number; see p. B120.

Priest-Wizard

130 points

This template represents Christian priests or Sunni Muslim mullahs who have learned magic with the permission of their superiors. Characters made with this template were born with magical talent but probably regard their abilities as divine gifts. They may also have other "inspired" powers, represented as Blessed or True Faith.

Attributes: ST 10 [0]; DX 10 [0]; IQ 13 [60]; HT 10 [0].

Secondary Characteristics: Dmg 1d-2/1d; BL 20 lbs.; HP 10 [0]; Will 15 [10]; Per 13 [0]; FP 10 [0]; Basic Speed 5 [0]; Basic Move 5 [0].

Advantages: Clerical Investment [5], Magery 1 [15], and 15 points chosen from among Blessed (Blessed or Heroic Feats) [10], Charisma [5/level], Close to Heaven [5/level], Language Talent [10], Languages (Any, particularly Latin and Arabic) [Varies], more Magery [10/level], Patron (Own church or order) [Varies], Religious Rank [5/level], True Faith [15], or Voice [10].

Disadvantages: Duty (To own church or order; Nonhazardous; 12 or less) [-5], and -15 points chosen from among Charitable [-15*], Curious [-5*], Disciplines of Faith [-5, -10, or -15], Fanaticism [-15], Honesty [-10*], Intolerance (Other religions) [-10], Pacifism [Varies], Sense of Duty [Varies], Truthfulness [-5*], or Vow [-5, -10, or -15].

Missionaries

Missionaries are priests – usually Christian, but occasionally members of other religions – who go out and convert people to their faith. The best do it with a kind word and a good example; the worst use the point of a sword. A very few are priest-wizards (see template).

A missionary will usually have Clerical Investment, the Church as a Patron, a Duty (or possibly Sense of Duty), and the skills Propaganda, Public Speaking, Teaching, and Theology. Successful ones usually have Charisma or Voice and speak several languages; those who are remembered (often as martyrs) should add Fearlessness or Indomitable. They may be motivated by Disadvantages such as Charitable, Fanaticism, Obsession, or Vows. Most acquire skills such as Area Knowledge, Diplomacy, Hiking, Riding, or Survival.

A missionary of the Olybrian Order (p. 62) must take Vows of poverty and chastity (both Minor). Olybrians have a group Reputation as diligent proselytizers who work on behalf of the poor, which gives them a -1 from heretics, and a +1 from Christian peasants.

Primary Skills: Apportation, Aura, Continual Light, Create Water, Detect Magic, Ignite Fire, Lend Energy, Lend Vitality, Light, Magelock, Purify Air, Purify Water, Seek Water, and Sense Foes, all (H) [1]-12†; Banish, Counterspell, Deflect Missile, Dispel Magic, and Minor Healing, all (H) IQ [2]-13†; Major Healing (VH) IQ-1 [2]-12†; Religious Ritual (Own religion) (H) IQ [4]-13; and Theology (Own religion) (H) IQ [4]-13.

Secondary Skills: 6 points chosen from among Public Speaking and Teaching, both (A) IQ [2]-13; Diplomacy, Philosophy (any), and Psychology, all (H) IQ-1 [2]-12; Thaumatology (VH) IQ-1 [2]-12†; or Detect Lies (H) Per-1 [2]-12.

Background Skills: 5 points chosen from among First Aid/TL3 (E) IQ [1]-13; Leadership, Politics, Research/TL3, and Writing, all (A) IQ-1 [1]-12; Law (Religious) (H) IQ-2 [1]-11; Singing (E) HT [1]-10; or Meditation (H) Will-2 [1]-13.

* Multiplied for self-control number; see p. B120.

† +1 from Magery.

Priest-Wizard Lenses

These lenses may be applied to the priest-wizard template to represent membership in specific orders:

Jesuit (+3 points): Patron (The Jesuits; 9 or less) [15], Reputation (As a Jesuit conspirator: -2; From secular wizards and some nobility: Large Group; 10 or less) [-2], Vow (Chastity) [-5], and Vow (Poverty) [-5]. (In fact, some Ytarrian Jesuits are not particularly saintly, and may effectively lack one or both Vows.) A Jesuit will know Latin at some level, and may spend background skill points on any intellectual secular field, such as Alchemy, Architecture, History, or Philosophy.

Thomasite (+2 points): Patron (The Thomasites; 9 or less) [15], Vow (Chastity) [-5], Vow (Poverty) [-5], Vow (To refrain from evil magic and offensive combat spells) [-5], and Philosophy (Ethics) (H) IQ-1 [2]-12. (Note that *all* Thomasites study magic, so the Vow is appropriate even for non-mages.) Latin, sometimes Arabic, and Teaching and Research/TL3 skills are strongly recommended. Most members of the order have at least the Quirk "Inquisitive" when they're not outright Curious.

Swashbuckler

150 points

A swashbuckler is a fighter who specializes in light fencing weapons – traditionally a light-hearted rogue with a fondness for taverns. In and around Araterre, some are actually pirates, others are just sailors with some combat skills, and others again are men-at-arms serving local nobles. It is assumed this character is from Araterre; if not, replace the High TL +1 advantage with another 5-point advantage, and lower the TL of all affected skills to 3.

Attributes: ST 11 [10]; DX 13 [60]; IQ 11 [20]; HT 12 [20].

Secondary Characteristics: Dmg 1d-1/1d+1; BL 24 lbs.; HP 11 [0]; Will 11 [0]; Per 11 [0]; FP 12 [0]; Basic Speed 6.25 [0]; Basic Move 6 [0].

Advantages: High TL +1 [5]; *one* of Combat Reflexes [15], Danger Sense [15], Daredevil [15], *or* Peripheral Vision [15]; and *either* one of the other three choices, *or* 15 points chosen from among Acute Senses [2/level], Appearance (Attractive) [4] *or* Appearance (Beautiful/Handsome) [12], Ambidexterity [5], Charisma [5/level], Fashion Sense [5], Fearlessness [2/level], Fit [5] *or* Very Fit [15], High Pain Threshold [10], Honest Face [1], No Hangover [1], Rapid Healing [5] *or* Very Rapid Healing [15], or Reputation [Varies].

Disadvantages: Overconfidence [-5*]; and -15 points chosen from among Code of Honor (Gentleman's, Pirate's, or other) [-5, -10, or -15], Compulsive Carousing [-5*], Compulsive Spending [-5*], Enemy (Cuckolded spouse or any) [Varies], Impulsiveness [-10*], Jealousy [-10], Reputation [Varies], Selfish [-5*], Sense of Duty (Close companions or any) [Varies], or Vow [-5, -10, or -15].

Primary Skills: Main-Gauche (A) DX+1 [4]-14; Thrown Weapon (Knife) (E) DX+2 [4]-15; and *one* of Rapier, Saber, *or* Smallsword, all (A) DX+1 [4]-14.

Secondary Skills: 8 points chosen from among Brawling and Knife, both (E) DX+1 [2]-14; Wrestling (A) DX [2]-13; Acrobatics and Judo, both (H) DX-1 [2]-12; Savoir-Faire (Any) (E) IQ+1 [2]-12; Fast-Talk (A) IQ [2]-11; Carousing (E) HT+1 [2]-13; or Sex Appeal (A) HT [2]-12.

Background Skills: 5 points chosen from among Fast-Draw (Sword) and Jumping, both (E) DX [1] -13; Boating/TL4 (Unpowered), Climbing, Riding (Equines), and Stealth, all (A) DX-1 [1]-12; Seamanship/TL4 (E) IQ [1]-11; Armoury/TL4 (Melee Weapons), Gambling, and Streetwise, all (A) IQ-1 [1]-10; Tactics (H) IQ-2 [1]-9; Swimming (E) HT [1]-12; or Intimidation (A) Will-1 [1]-10.

* Multiplied for self-control number; see p. B120.

Underground Engineer

150 points

In Ytarria, many factions try to suppress the advance of technology, *especially* gunpowder (see p. 30). Underground engineers don't let that stop them.

This template describes an engineer who can create TL5 devices – perhaps an immigrant from Earth or elsewhere, perhaps a clever native. It might not be suitable in all campaigns; players should check with their GM, particularly if they plan on taking the Gizmo advantage.

Attributes: ST 12 [20]; DX 10 [0]; IQ 13 [60]; HT 10 [0].

Secondary Characteristics: Dmg 1d-1/1d+2; BL 29 lbs.; HP 12 [0]; Will 14 [5]; Per 14 [5]; FP 10 [0]; Basic Speed 5 [0]; Basic Move 5 [0].

Sailors

Sailors often live adventurous lives, especially as the difference between merchant vessels and military ships is not always clear-cut. A true adventurer-sailor can be based on the Merchant, Northern Barbarian, or Swashbuckler. Capable sailors can have advantages such as Absolute Direction and Less Sleep, disadvantages such as a Duty, Code of Honor (Pirate's), Odious Personal Habit (Curses like a sailor), or Sense of Duty (Shipmates), and the skills Boating, Climbing, and Seamanship. Survival and Swimming can be invaluable; good officers add Leadership, Navigation, and Shiphandling. Brawling, Carousing, Jumping, Knife, and Streetwise aren't required, but are *very* common.

For an ordinary seaman, the basic job stats are:

Prerequisites: Seamanship and Climbing at 12+.

Job Roll: Worst prerequisite skill-1. On critical failure, 1d injury.

Monthly Pay: $700.

Wealth Level: Average. Supports Status 0.

Advantages: Artificer 2 [20], High TL 2 [10], and 30 points chosen from among more levels in Artificer [10/level], more Contacts (Other underground engineers) [Varies], Eidetic Memory [5] *or* Photographic Memory [10], Flexibility [5] *or* Double-Jointed [15], Gadgeteer [25], Gizmos [5/gizmo], High Manual Dexterity [5/level], more High TL [5/level]‡, Lightning Calculator [2], Signature Gear (High-tech devices) [Varies], Single-Minded [5], Unusual Background (Earth immigrant, technological education, or planar traveler; see p. 184) [10 or 15], Versatile [5], or Wealth (Comfortable) [10], Wealth (Wealthy) [20], *or* Wealth (Very Wealthy) [30].

Disadvantages: *Either* Secret (Underground engineer; Imprisonment or Exile) [-20] *or* Enemy (Organizations out to suppress technological advance: Utterly Formidable; 6 or less) [-20]; and -20 points chosen from among Absent-Mindedness [-15], Compulsive Behavior (Tinker, invent, etc.) [-5*], Cowardice [-10*], Curious [-5*], another Enemy (Someone who wants to interrogate you) [Varies], Greed [-15*], Megalomania [-10], Oblivious [-5], Obsession (Bring the Industrial Revolution to Yrth) [-10*], Overconfidence [-5*], Paranoia [-10], Stubbornness [-5], or Workaholic [-5].

Primary Skills: Engineer/TL5 (Clockwork) (H) IQ+2 [4]-15†; Engineer/TL5 (Electrical) (H) IQ+2 [4]-15†; Engineer/TL5 (Small Arms) (H) IQ+2 [4]-15†; and Engineer/TL5 (Steam Power Plants) (H) IQ+2 [4]-15†.

Secondary Skills: 18 points chosen from among Crossbow (E) DX+1 [2]-11; Axe/Mace (A) DX [2]-10; Explosives/TL5 (Demolition) (A) IQ [2]-13; Armoury/TL5 (Small Arms), Electrician/TL5, Machinist/TL5, Mechanic/TL5 (Clockwork), Mechanic/TL5 (Steam Power Plant), and Smith/TL5 (Iron and Steel), all (A) IQ+2 [2]-15†; Chemistry/TL5 and Metallurgy/TL5, both (H) IQ-1 [2] -12; or Physics/TL5 (VH) IQ-2 [2] -11.

Background Skills: Mathematics/TL5 (Applied) (H) IQ-2 [1]-11; and 5 points chosen from among Guns/TL5 (Musket) (E) DX [1] -10; Camouflage (E) IQ [1]-13; Carpentry (E) IQ+2 [1]-15†; Acting, Fast-Talk, Hidden Lore (Earth), Holdout, Prospecting/TL5, Teaching, and Traps/TL5, all (A) IQ-1 [1]-12; or Scrounging (E) Per [1]-14.

* Multiplied for self-control number; see p. B120.

† +2 from Artificer.

‡ Unusual Background is a prerequisite for High TL +3 or higher. See p. 183.

Urban Rogue

150 points

Urban rogues can range from gentlemanly cat burglars to out-and-out thugs. Punishments for criminals in Ytarria are severe and often permanent, so a rogue is forever skirting the edge of danger.

Rogues may also function as spies; this usually represents a Secret at the 20- or 30-point level, as a spy who is exposed may be hunted down or at least forced to flee. Most have Shadowing and Observation skills and may add Current Affairs.

Attributes: ST 10 [0]; DX 13 [60]; IQ 12 [40]; HT 11 [10].

Secondary Characteristics: Dmg 1d-2/1d; BL 20 lbs.; HP 10 [0]; Will 12 [0]; Per 13 [5]; FP 11 [0]; Basic Speed 6 [0]; Basic Move 6 [0].

Advantages: 25 points chosen from among Absolute Direction [5], Acute Senses [2/level], Contacts (Authorities or street) [Varies], Danger Sense [15], Daredevil [15], Fearlessness [2/level], Flexibility [5] *or* Double-Jointed [15], High Manual Dexterity [5/level], Honest Face [1], Less Sleep [2/level], Night Vision [1/level], or Patron (Thieves' Guild; 9 or less) [10].

Disadvantages: *One* of Debt (15% of Starting Wealth/Month) [-15], Greed [-15*], Kleptomania [-15*], *or* Trickster [-15*]; and *either* one of the other three choices, *or* -15 points chosen from among Code of Honor (Pirate's, Stays Bought, or similar) [-5], Duty (To Thieves' Guild, 9 or less) [-5] or Duty (As above, but also Involuntary) [-10], Enemy (The authorities: Medium-Sized Group; 6 or less) [-10]†, Loner [-5*], Secret (Criminal; Utter Rejection) [-10]†, Social Stigma (Known Criminal) [-5]†, Status -1 or -2 [-5 or -10], Trademark [-5, -10, or -15], or Wealth (Struggling) [-10] *or* Wealth (Poor) [-15].

Primary Skills: 24 points chosen from among Brawling (E) DX+2 [4]-14; Stealth (A) DX+1 [4]-14; Pickpocket (H) DX [4]-13; Area Knowledge (Local) (E) IQ+2 [4]-14; or Fast-Talk, Lockpicking/TL3, Streetwise, and Traps/TL3, all (A) IQ+1 [4]-13.

Secondary Skills: 10 points chosen from among Knife and Forced Entry, both (E) DX+1 [2]-14; Filch (A) DX [2]-13; Holdout and Shadowing, both (A) IQ [2]-12; Running (A) HT [2]-11; or Observation (A) Per [2]-13.

Background Skills: 6 points chosen from among Climbing (A) DX-1 [1]-12; Escape (H) DX-2 [1]-11; Acting, Architecture/TL3, and Merchant, all (A) IQ-1 [1]-11; Intimidation (A) Will-1 [1]-11; Scrounging (E) Per [1]-13; or Detect Lies (H) Per-2 [1]-11.

* Multiplied for self-control number; see p. B120.

† Note that if you take the Enemy and/or Social Stigma disadvantages, you may not take Secret.

Watchman

150 points

A watchman patrols a city or town, dealing with disturbances. Most are not much like Earth police; their job is to keep the peace. If there's a murder and the killer isn't obvious, they will usually only investigate if the victim had powerful friends or relatives. However, in some larger cities, the Watch is becoming more like a genuine crime-solving agency.

Attributes: ST 12 [20]; DX 12 [40]; IQ 11 [20]; HT 12 [20].

Secondary Characteristics: Dmg 1d-1/1d+2; BL 29 lbs.; HP 12 [0]; Will 11 [0]; Per 13 [10]; FP 12 [0]; Basic Speed 6 [0]; Basic Move 6 [0].

Advantages: Legal Enforcement Powers [10]; Patron (City or town government; 9 or less) [10]; and 20 points chosen from among Acute Senses [2/level], Combat Reflexes [15], Contacts (Street) [Varies], Danger Sense [15], Fearlessness [2/level], Hard to Subdue [2/level], Night Vision [1/level], Sensitive [5] *or* Empathy [15], or spending more on the Patron.

Disadvantages: Duty (To city or town government; 12 or less) [-10], and -15 points chosen from among Bully [-10*], Curious [-5*], Enemy (Underworld figure) [Varies], Pacifism (Cannot Harm Innocents) [-10], Honesty [-10*], Laziness [-10], Sense of Duty (To honest folk or any) [Varies], or Truthfulness [-5*].

Primary Skills: Area Knowledge (Local) (E) IQ+2 [4]-13; Brawling (A) DX+1 [4]-13; and Broadsword (A) DX+1 [4]-13.

Secondary Skills: Detect Lies (H) Per-1 [2]-12; Intimidation (A) Will [2]-11; Law (Local) (H) IQ-1 [2]-10; and Streetwise (A) IQ [2]-11.

Background Skills: 5 points chosen from among First Aid/TL3 (E) IQ [1]-11; Criminology/TL3, Fast-Talk, Interrogation, and Public Speaking, all (A) IQ-1 [1]-10; Diplomacy (H) IQ-2 [1]-9; or Running (A) HT-1 [1]-11.

* Multiplied for self-control number; see p. B120.

Job Description

Prerequisites: Area Knowledge (Local) 12+ and two combat skills at 13+.

Job Roll: Best combat skill. On critical failure, take 2d damage.

Monthly Pay: $500.

Wealth Level: Average. Supports Status 0.

Woodsman

150 points

Woodsmen with effectively identical talents might be "foresters" guarding a noble's woodlands, elite troops specializing in scouting and guerrilla warfare, or experienced poachers. Specialized "rangers" can be found in mountains, swamps, deserts, or any other terrain capable of supporting wildlife, doing many such jobs.

Attributes: ST 11 [10]; DX 13 [60]; IQ 11 [20]; HT 12 [20].

Secondary Characteristics: Dmg 1d-1/1d+1; BL 24 lbs.; HP 11 [0]; Will 11 [0]; Per 13 [10]; FP 12 [0]; Basic Speed 6.25 [0]; Basic Move 6 [0].

Advantages: Outdoorsman 2 [20], and 10 points chosen from among Absolute Direction [5], Acute Sense [2/level], Animal Empathy [5], Fit [5], High Pain Threshold [10], Night Vision [1/level], another level of Outdoorsman [10], Patron (Liege lord or other) [Varies], Plant Empathy [5], Resistant to Disease +3 [3], or Resistant to Poison +3 [5].

Disadvantages: -30 points chosen from among Callous [-5], Code of Honor (Elven or any) [-5, -10, or -15], Curious [-5*], Easy to Read [-10], Impulsiveness [-10*], Loner [-5*], Low Empathy [-20], Odious Personal Habit (No social graces, or other) [-5, -10, or -15], Overconfidence [-5*], Sense of Duty (To nature) [-15], Shyness [-5, -10, or -20], or Wealth (Struggling) [-10] *or* Wealth (Poor) [-15].

Primary Skills: Naturalist (H) IQ+2 [4]-13†; Stealth (A) DX+1 [4]-14; Survival (Woodlands or other) (A) Per+3 [4]-16†; and 6 points in weapon skills.

Secondary Skills: 8 points chosen from among Camouflage (E) IQ+3 [2]-14†; Weather Sense (A) IQ [2] -11; Navigation/TL3 (Land) (A) IQ+2 [2]-13†; Hiking (A) HT [2]-12; or Tracking (A) Per+2 [2]-15†.

Background Skills: 4 points chosen from among Climbing and Throwing, both (A) DX-1 [1] -12; Area Knowledge (Any) (E) IQ [1]-11; Armoury/TL3 (Melee Weapons) and Traps/TL3, both (A) IQ-1 [1]-10; Mimicry (Animal Sounds) (H) IQ [1]-11†; Swimming (E) HT [1]-12; Running (A) HT-1 [1]-11; Fishing (E) Per+2 [1]-15†; or Survival (Other) (A) Per+1 [1] -14†.

* Multiplied for self-control number; see p. B120.

† +2 from Outdoorsman.

The Silver Hand Lens

Agents of King Conall's Hand (p. 110) may be created using several of these templates, including the Courtier, Merchant, Knight, or Urban Rogue, with options appropriate to a spy. A few would take the Assassin template. They should add the following lens:

Silver Hand (+12 points): Patron (King of Caithness; 9 or less) [15], Duty (To the King, 9 or less) [-5], and Area Knowledge (Caithness) (E) IQ+1 [2] (actual level will depend on the template's IQ). They should usually also have skills such as Acting, Current Affairs/TL3, Observation, and Stealth.

Chapter Six
Creatures

"Left! In the thicket to your left!"

Gervaise turned Sunrunner with a bare shift of weight on the cavalry saddle. He'd spent years working with the horse, so that it now seemed almost to read his mind, leaving his hands free to wield spear and shield. Now, at the word from the canny half-elf forester some yards behind him, he focused his attention on the stand of trees where the day's quarry might be hiding.

He didn't have to look for long. There was a scream of bestial rage, and Gervaise had a sudden glimpse of wings, claws, wild eyes, and grotesquely human-like features hurtling down at him. He swung his spear up, using the momentum of his horse's charge to add strength to the thrust.

His aim was good, but not good enough; the point scored only a glancing blow across the harpy's body, and in the next moment he was using his shield to fend off the monster's filth-caked claws. He cast the spear aside and clutched for his sword; the harpy wouldn't give him space to use the longer weapon.

Gervaise grimaced as Sunrunner twisted sideways with well-trained combat skill. A stray harpy was no trophy for a knight – its head would look obscene on his wall. But given what it had been doing in the peasants' barns and to their blacksheep herds, it was going to have to die this day.

Ytarria has a startling range of wildlife, including many species which arrived through the Banestorm – some, it is thought, from otherwise unknown worlds. The details given here use the same formats and guidelines as Chapter 16 of the ***Basic Set.*** Several creatures mentioned briefly here are given fuller treatments there.

"Ordinary" Wildlife

Although Yrth had a full ecology of its own, the Banestorm has brought many new species, some of which moved into the new environment very successfully. Although some distinctive native species survive, they tend to be either very large predators or live in marginal environments.

See p. B455-461 for game statistics for most of the species discussed here.

Bears

Bears find Yrth's forests hospitable. Most are European-descended black bears, but there are stories of creatures that could be grizzly or cave bears, as well as the gigantic night-stalkers (p. 223).

Big Cats

Similarly, lions passed through the Banestorm and bred. However, they're now found only in remoter parts of southern Ytarria; humans are too fond of hunting them. Few other large Earth felines are found on Yrth.

Deer

While species such as red deer are not usually either dangerous or domesticated, they are interesting game for hunts, and provide good meat. Nobles usually claim all the

deer in their forests as their personal property, and punish poachers severely – but for a hungry peasant, the temptation may be too great.

Wild Boars

Several species of wild boar are common in northern and central Ytarria. Nobles and warriors regard them as challenging sport, and often work to conserve breeding populations.

Wild Cattle

Yrth cattle are mostly domesticated (see p. 229), but some are feral. For a wild bull, use the ox (p. B460), but replace Domestic Animal and Neutered with Wild Animal, Combat Reflexes, and Bad Temper.

Wolves

These efficient, smart, and adaptable pack predators are as widespread on Ytarria as on Earth. While most will avoid humans, some attack with extraordinary savagery and cunning.

Vermin

Yrth has small animals as well as large, and some of them infest human habitations, making a nuisance of themselves. The new world has not enabled humanity to escape from rats or mice, and the same goes for a range of biting insects. The worst are said to be the midges of the coastal Nomad Lands, which are so bad in the summer that the locals dream of the joys of winter.

Other pests native to Earth include the occasional vampire bat in Araterre, and thankfully rare locust swarms in western al-Haz. More exotic problems include the *swamp thrimminy*, a long-tailed amphibian, native to Yrth. It likes cool, damp conditions, and has a talent for getting into and spoiling food stocks.

There is also the *d'baajori*, a tiny climbing pseudo-primate from Gabrook. It likes hot, dry conditions, and breeds rapidly wherever there is enough food and water. D'baajori are normally shy, but in their late spring breeding season, they can form excitable, aggressive swarms. In game terms, a swarm (see p. B461) consists of 30-40 d'baajori, has Move 3 on the ground, and can climb just as fast on most vertical surfaces. It does 1d-1 cutting damage per turn (armor protects with its normal DR), and disperses after losing 7 HP.

Fantastical Creatures

Some of these exotic animals are native to Yrth, while others are Banestorm victims, and still others are the product of magical accidents or experiments. Indeed, high-mana regions can have bizarre effects on animals, and some of the results can breed true.

Basilisks

On Yrth, this creature (see p. B460) is found only in the Great Desert and is rare even there. Fortunately, its gaze attack does not work through a mirror. (Attacking a creature only observed in a mirror is at -5.) The basilisk's attack is also ineffective against weasels, which will attack a basilisk on sight. Acquiring a caged weasel and keeping it healthy in the desert can be an interesting challenge, though, to say the least. The basilisk also suffers from Dreads of the crowing of a cockerel and the herb known as rue (both with a 5-yard radius).

Some stories claim that the basilisk is winged; if the GM decides this is true, add Flight (Winged; Air Move 10) to its traits. Its blood is rumored to be highly poisonous; the truth behind this is again up to the GM.

Bushwolves

The bushwolf is a strange beast, common in the badlands of al-Haz and al-Wazif. A marsupial with a rear-facing pouch, it has the head and teeth of a wolf, a long supple tail more like a kangaroo's, and a tiger-striped body. Bushwolves are about 5-6 feet long, smaller and lighter than a true wolf, and not nearly as quick or coordinated. They have an odd, shambling gait – either a leisurely trot which they can maintain for hours, or an offbeat canter for when they're in a hurry. They can also hop on their back legs for short periods.

Bushwolves feed on small grazing animals and ground birds, wearing down their prey in long, slow chases. They live in small caves, rock piles, or hollow trees and logs, and hunt singly at night. They appear almost comical until one sees their powerful jaws and wicked teeth. A bushwolf usually kills by crushing its prey's skull. People regard them as more a threat to herds than a menace to humans, but they sometimes attack lone travelers, and can give careless hunters a nasty surprise.

ST 8; **DX** 10; **IQ** 3; **HT** 11.
Will 11; **Per** 14; **Speed** 5.25; **Dodge** 8; **Move** 6.
SM +0 (1 hex); 80 lbs.

Traits: Discriminatory Smell; DR 1; Enhanced Move 1/2 (Ground Speed 9; Costs Fatigue 2); Night Vision 2; Quadruped; Sharp Teeth; Striking ST +5 (Bite Only); Temperature Tolerance 1; Wild Animal.
Skills: Brawling-12; Tracking-12.

Caustiguses

The caustigus is one of Yrth's strangest creatures. Although sapient, it is vicious, bestial, and solitary. It is only known to live in the Acid Swamps of Solfor, in the southern Orclands. It is immune to their burning acid (see *The Acid Swamps,* box). It has a distorted humanoid head, no neck, and four long arms with large, clawed hands. Some caustiguses have learned to speak Anglish or Orcish – no one knows from whom – but they normally regard intruders purely as prey.

Caustiguses lurk in the acid swamps with only their heads above the surface. When they see a victim, they reach out and grab it. Their arms each have a 2-hex reach, and it can use them all at once. This attack counts as a grapple (despite the distance). The turn after getting a grip, it will try to drag its prey into the acid. Roll a quick contest of ST, with the caustigus getting +2 if it is grabbing its victim with three arms, or +4 for four. If it wins, the victim is pulled one hex toward it. Anyone dragged into the swamp will take acid damage.

A caustigus is hard to injure permanently. Damage to its arms (or to the body or legs, although these are usually underwater) regenerates at 1 HP per turn for each arm, unless the arm is completely severed. (This takes 8 HP of cutting or fire damage.) Its head is relatively vulnerable, and cannot regenerate damage. Furthermore, its sensitive eyes are adapted to the dim swamp, and it hates bright light. It takes a -1 penalty to attack rolls and DX rolls for each torch within 6 hexes. A Flash or Fireball spell will make a caustigus flee immediately. In fact, a caustigus will never willingly fight to the death. The moment it feels its life is in danger, it releases any prey and disappears beneath the surface of the swamp.

ST 14; **DX** 14; **IQ** 10; **HT** 13.
Will 10; **Per** 12; **Speed** 6.75; **Dodge** 9; **Move** 6.
SM +0 (1 hex); 200 lbs.

Traits: Amphibious; Bestial; Blunt Claws; Breath-Holding 5; Callous; DR 2; DR +5 (Limited, Corrosion); Extra Arms 2; Extra Attack 3; Loner; Long Arms (+2 SM); Nictitating Membrane 5; Perk: Totally immune to swamp-acid effects; Pressure Support 1; Regeneration (Extreme, Not Head, Only 1 HP/second for each body part).

Skills: Stealth-15; Survival (Swamp) -14.

The Acid Swamps

The "water" in these dark swamps is a thick, soupy acid. Use the rules on p. B61 and p. B428, but this acid is fairly weak; it does only 1d-4 corrosion damage on a splash, 1d-2 per second on immersion, or 2d+1 if swallowed. Also, it does not affect earth, most types of stone, glass, and a few organic materials, including the weird swampland vegetation and the skins of both caustiguses and reptile men.

In fact, such skins could be fashioned into a container for the liquid, though reptile men might have their own opinions of that idea. Reptile men still take damage if they *swallow* swamp-acid; caustiguses seem unaffected, but they do have regenerative abilities.

Demons

Demons are possibly the only race or species known on Yrth that is *by definition* evil. They match the description given in ***GURPS Magic,*** which is to say they conform to no set rules for their shape, powers, or game statistics. Almost all demons who make it to Yrth are deliberately summoned, or arrive thanks to magic gone awry. They come from some other realm which, if not actually Hell, is apparently similar. Their plane of origin is unaffected by Yrth's "quantum Sargasso" nature (p. 26); a roll to summon or banish a demon takes no penalty. Presumably traveling to that place is also relatively easy for non-demons, though not appealing.

Most religions in Ytarria, particularly mainstream Christianity and Islam, regard demons as pure evil. Doing anything with them except killing them is a sin. Consorting with them is also usually stupid; demons only want to spread suffering and are only too happy to bring more of their kind here.

Giant Spiders

The giant spider of Yrth is a creature of the Great Forest and the Blackwoods. It's very uncommon, and

many people regard it as a legend to frighten children. In fact, it has the ability to hibernate in a deep torpor for years in well-hidden lairs, so sightings are extremely rare. It's an ugly creature, with a bloated, 6' long body and eight hairy, 4' long legs.

When disturbed by intruders or roused by hunger, it uses the hunting tactics of the trapdoor spider, lurking in deep shadows or recesses and leaping out onto victims. It can track prey by faint vibrations in its environment, as well as by sight. It typically grapples, bites to inject its paralyzing venom, and then drags its prey back to its nest to feed at leisure. It may pursue fleeing opponents but will rarely leave the dark caverns or deep woods where its abilities serve it best.

ST 17; **DX** 15; **IQ** 2; **HT** 13.
Will 10; **Per** 13; **Speed** 7; **Dodge** 10; **Move** 7.
SM +0 (1 hex); 250 lbs.

Traits: Affliction 4 (Paralysis; Extended Duration ×100; Follow-Up, Fangs); Bad Grip 2; Cold-Blooded (50°); DR 2; Extra Legs (8 total, uses 2 as arms when grappling); Fangs; Injury Tolerance (No Neck); Night Vision 9; No Fine Manipulators; Peripheral Vision; Semi-Upright; Vibration Sense; Wild Animal.
Skills: Climbing-14; Stealth-17; Wrestling-15.

Gryphons

On Yrth, the gryphon (p. B460) is a fairly common predator, found in all forested and mountainous areas, especially the Fence of God, the Great Forest, and the Emperor's Forest in Megalos. Its feathers are used by wizards in enchantments. It can be trained using Animal Handling (Raptor Hybrids) or Animal Handling (Feline Hybrids); see p. 224. The -3 penalty to Animal Handling mentioned for working with gryphons in the ***Basic Set*** is the default for these from non-hybrid versions of the skill. Any failure on a roll to control a gryphon can be very dangerous; the sharp claws and powerful beak may be turned on the handler.

Bestial but Intelligent

A few "creatures" listed here, such as the caustigus (and to a lesser extent the pegasus and unicorn), have IQ ratings exceeding those of normal animals, or even approaching human levels. However, that doesn't mean that they are necessarily "intelligent" by human standards. In ***GURPS*** terms, they have the Bestial disadvantage (p. B124), and should be played exactly as that is defined.

Such creatures do not make very interesting characters, even as NPCs, but they can make terrifying *monsters*. They have the cunning to set or escape moderately complex traps, and to defer instinctive gratification if they can get a better result by waiting. They may also have a grasp of other beings' desires and motivations, but they are unlikely to *care* much about them. This understanding just lets them threaten, cajole, and manipulate. They might be "reasoned" or "bargained" with, and are capable of loyalty of an animalistic sort, but they probably lack any sense of "honor" – not because they are necessarily evil, but simply because honor is a matter of social propriety.

GMs should remember that such creatures are fundamentally alien. They should disturb PCs who try to deal with them as anything beyond opponents, and they are too tricky and self-willed to tame. That said, they can understand good consequences as well as bad, and an adventurer who goes to the trouble of building and maintaining a working relationship with, say, a pegasus mount, can acquire a formidable ally.

Harpies

Harpies appear to be half woman, half bird. In fact, there's nothing human about them at all – they aren't sapient, don't use tools, and don't speak. Though they have no hands, their feet sport large claws. They're usually encountered in groups of five or more, active day or night. They are most commonly found in the badlands of al-Haz and al-Wazif or in mountainous areas of the Great Forest and the Emperor's Forest.

Harpies take a bizarre, compulsive delight in befouling food and drink; the stench they leave sends most other beings reeling, and the food will be completely inedible. Otherwise, they act much like aggressive predatory animals, with neither a fear of humans nor any great interest in human prey. They will rarely harm anyone not in their way, but will viciously attack anyone who is. People wounded by a harpy's claws must roll for infection (p. B444); treat this as a wound with infected matter in it.

Harpies usually attack with their claws from above (often striking for opponents' heads). They are less effective fighters on the ground; their Dodge falls to 6.

ST 12; **DX** 13; **IQ** 5; **HT** 13.
Will 10; **Per** 12; **Speed** 6.5; **Dodge** 10; **Move** 3.
SM +0 (1 hex); 150 lbs.

Traits: Bad Temper (9); Combat Reflexes; DR 1; Enhanced Move 1/2 (Air Speed 19); Flight (Winged; Air Move 13); No Fine Manipulators; Sharp Claws; Wild Animal.
Skills: Brawling-15.

Hellsharks

Hellsharks may be the most ferocious creatures in Yrth's oceans. Fast, with rows of sharp teeth in huge, gaping jaws that can swallow a man whole, they devour anything and everything that comes their way. They fear nothing – not even the great kraken of the deep. They've been known to go after boats, and are a particular problem near milkfish farms.

ST 60; **DX** 13; **IQ** 2; **HT** 12.
Will 10; **Per** 10; **Speed** 6.25; **Dodge** 10; **Move** 10 (Water).
SM +6 (20 hexes); 22,000 lbs.

Traits: Bad Temper (12); Cold-Blooded (50°); Combat Reflexes; Crushing Striker (Snout); Discriminatory Smell; Doesn't Breathe (Gills); DR 1; Ichthyoid; Pressure Support 2; Sharp Teeth; Subsonic Hearing; Vibration Sense; Wild Animal.

Skills: Brawling-14; Survival (Open Ocean)-14.

Hippogriffs

A hippogriff has the hindquarters of a horse and the forequarters of a gryphon – in other words, the head and wings of an eagle, with the chest and forelegs of a lion. Due to its horse-like build, the hippogriff is fast on the ground as well as in the air. Like the gryphon, it is *immune* to abilities that affect only mammals or only birds. It is magical, and enchanters value its feathers for use in spells and elixirs.

Hippogriffs are exceedingly rare everywhere except the northern Whitehood Mountains; even there, they are not common! A young one is worth $20,000 or more to a trainer, a wild adult at least $10,000. Their horse-like nature means they can be tamed, but this requires the skills Animal Handling (Raptor Hybrids) or Animal Handling (Equine Hybrids), usually defaulting from another specialization; see p. 224. However, hippogriffs rarely breed in captivity, and a critical failure on a roll to control one is often very dangerous. They can attack by kicking with their rear-leg hooves, raking with their front-leg claws, or biting with their beaks, and will do so if angered or panicked.

ST 18; **DX** 12; **IQ** 3; **HT** 12.
Will 11; **Per** 12; **Speed** 6; **Dodge** 10; **Move** 6.
SM +1 (3 hexes); 650 lbs.

Traits: Acute Vision 2; Combat Reflexes; DR 1; Enhanced Move 1/2 (Air Speed 18); Enhanced Move 1 (Ground Speed 12); Flight (Winged; Air Move 12); Hooves (Hind Feet Only); Quadruped; Sharp Beak; Sharp Claws (Front Feet Only); Wild Animal.

Skills: Brawling-13.

Hydras

A hydra is a very rare quasi-reptilian creature with many heads, occasionally found in the coastal marshlands of Cardiel. Blatantly magical and given to attacking humans on sight, hydras are regarded as evil menaces. Fortunately, they mostly remain hidden in remote lairs. Their life cycle and habits are unknown; they may actually be produced by some bizarre supernatural effect. If one ventures near inhabited lands, someone will eventually have to hunt it down, but people rightly regard this as a heroic task.

The hydra's body can take a great deal of damage, but that's not what makes it formidable. If one of a hydra's heads is destroyed, *two* more will grow in its place, unless the attacker immediately applies fire to the wound. Whenever a hydra takes enough damage to a head or neck to render a normal creature dead, that head shrivels and falls off. In three turns, two new heads begin to grow in its place; after seven more turns, they reach full size and can attack. At any time before these 10 seconds are up, 6 HP (total, not per new head) of fire damage will permanently cauterize

Animal PCs

Some animals might be used as PCs in more whimsical Yrth-based games – or at least, as useful Allies. Templates for some plausible candidates, the Great Eagle, Noble Horse, and Wise Owl, are on p. 194. Other species could be used in the right sort of game. Any creature might be rendered intelligent by a magical accident or a divine blessing – or it might just *happen*, as it does in fairy tales.

Each species might be given a racial template by the GM, or the appropriate advantages and disadvantages could be selected on an individual basis – but note that even an exceptionally intelligent, house-trained, adaptable animal will probably have more points from disadvantages than human PCs will be permitted.

the wound and wither both the new heads. The hydra has a form of the Supernatural Durability advantage; it dies when all its heads are destroyed and cauterized, or it is reduced to -10×HP by wounds to the body. In the latter case, the heads may continue writhing and lashing out for several minutes or even hours.

A hydra may have one or many heads when first encountered (roll 3d-2 for random determination); up to three can attack into any front or side hex simultaneously.

ST 18; **DX** 12; **IQ** 2; **HT** 13.
Will 13; **Per** 12; **Speed** 6.25; **Dodge** 9; **Move** 6.
SM +1 (3 hexes); 700 lbs.

Traits: Bad Temper (9); DR 3; Extra Attack 2; Extra Head (special variant – see notes); Fangs; Night Vision 2; Quadruped; Regeneration (heads only, special variant – see notes); Regrowth (heads only, special variant – see notes); Supernatural Durability; Wild Animal.

Krakens

Krakens are *huge* deep-sea squid. They continue to grow throughout their lives and thus vary considerably in size – anywhere from a mere 30 yards long to over 100. Their bodies are streamlined, with width being only 1/6 of total length. The details given here are for a *fairly* large kraken; a small specimen might be 50,000 lbs. and SM +7, with ST 40, while a real nightmare of the deep might weigh hundreds of tons, with SM +11 or higher and ST in the hundreds. HP are always twice ST.

A kraken attacking a ship will typically grab victims off the decks with its tentacles (treat as a grapple) and carry them to its beak while performing a constriction attack. Note that two of the tentacles have more reach than the other eight. When attacking something out of the water, a tentacle can reach one-third of its total length in height. The tentacles get no Dodge roll unless the kraken's body is lying on the surface of the water – it must be able to see well to defend.

If a victim seems too heavy for one tentacle to lift, the kraken will grapple

with a second one. Tentacles can move victims or objects at a rate of one yard per second. Alternatively, a kraken may just grab an entire small vessel and try to drag it under. Each tentacle can take damage up to 20% of the kraken's total hit points before being disabled.

Kraken are regarded as mysterious as well as terrifying by most races on Yrth. While they rarely surface, and attack humans even less often, their behavior is unpredictable, as their life cycles and habits are largely unknown. There are even tales of such monsters drawn close to land by some weird or magical impulse.

ST 80; **DX** 13; **IQ** 2; **HT** 12.
HP 160; **Will** 11; **Per** 12; **Speed** 6.25; **Dodge** 9; **Move** 6 (Water).
SM +9 (70 hexes); 500,000 lbs.

Traits: Ambidexterity; Cold-Blooded (50°); Constriction Attack; Doesn't Breathe (Gills); DR 3; Enhanced Move 1/2 (Water Speed 9); Extra Arms 8 (all arms are Extra-Flexible and Weak, 1/4 body ST; two are Long, +2 SM); Extra Attack 1; Injury Tolerance (No Neck, No Vitals); Night Vision 5; No Legs (Aquatic); Pressure Support 2; Sharp Beak; Subsonic Hearing; Wild Animal.
Skills: Survival (Open Ocean)-14.

Nightstalkers

Nightstalkers are giant, bear-like animals of incredible ferocity, inhabiting wooded areas of Megalos and Caithness. As the name implies, they are nocturnal; a nightstalker suffers the full effect of Bad Sight (Farsighted) in full sunlight, and a reduced effect (-1 to attack rolls) even if encountered in a darkened den by day. However, day or night, most nightstalkers will charge on sight, clawing, hugging, and biting. A nightstalker usually ambles along on all fours, but can stand on its back legs in combat.

Nightstalkers hunt large forest herbivores, but relish human meat. They cannot climb well, but will knock down quite large trees to get at climbing prey.

ST 25; **DX** 12; **IQ** 4; **HT** 13.
Will 12; **Per** 11; **Speed** 6.25; **Dodge** 9; **Move** 7.
SM +2 (4 hexes); 2,000 lbs.

Traits: Bad Sight (Farsighted; Only in bright light); Bad Temper (9); Blunt Claws; DR 2; Night Vision 8; Semi-Upright; Sharp Teeth; Temperature Tolerance 2; Wild Animal.
Skills: Brawling-14.

Paladins

Paladins are strange, turtle-like grazing mammals, covered in tough bony plates, articulated over the head and tail, with a solid dome covering the top of the main body. Their stomachs and bellies are relatively soft. Their tails are long, supple, and protected by durable plates, and end in balls of thorny spikes. They can strike to the sides or rear with surprising accuracy. Paladins inhabit southern areas of Ytarria, and are common on the plains of al-Haz.

Paladins are small-brained and very slow, but so well-protected that little bothers them. When trouble threatens, they generally continue ambling forward, swinging their tails back and forth, then swivel around to strike if the problem refuses to go away. Even the most ferocious predators can be dissuaded by this tactic, especially if there are several paladins.

ST 15; **DX** 12; **IQ** 2; **HT** 11.
Will 10; **Per** 10; **Speed** 3; **Dodge** 6; **Move** 3.
SM +1 (2 hexes); 500 lbs.

Traits: DR 1; DR +3 (head and tail only); DR +5 (upper body only); Peripheral Vision; Quadruped; Large Piercing Striker (Tail; Cannot Parry); Weak Bite; Wild Animal.

Pegasi

Pegasi are shy winged horses living in isolated valleys in the northern Whitehood and Bronze Mountains. They rarely attack; if threatened, they simply fly away. Their flight powers are partly magical, and as with other such creatures, their feathers are valuable to enchanters.

Pegasi are startlingly smart and extremely difficult to capture. They are impossible to tame or train in the normal way (such as with the Animal Handling skill), having intelligence comparable to the great apes and rather skittish, cautious natures. A gentle and respectful approach, perhaps combined with appropriate magic, may sometimes win a hero a wondrous mount, but a riding pegasus always has a mind of its own, and can never be taken for granted.

ST 20; **DX** 14; **IQ** 6; **HT** 12.
Will 11; **Per** 13; **Speed** 6.5; **Dodge** 9; **Move** 7.
SM +1 (3 hexes); 1,100 lbs.

Traits: Enhanced Move 1/2 (Air Speed 19); Enhanced Move 1 (Ground Speed 14); Flight (Winged; Air Move 13); Hooves; Peripheral Vision; Quadruped; Shyness (Severe); Weak Bite; Wild Animal.

Reeks

Found in caverns, deep woods, and jungles, reeks look like decaying lumps of brown jelly. They feed by covering and dissolving organic matter, living or dead. Although blind, reeks hate sunlight, and are active only when it isn't too bright. They locate prey by scent and vibration. They are usually solitary.

Reeks are hermaphroditic, and unaffected by ordinary animal control spells, being a form of unicellular life. They vary considerably in size, from 20 lbs. up to at least 60, or possibly much more; the details here are for an average specimen. For larger or smaller individuals, set ST equal to 1/10 weight, and HP to 1/3 weight. (Very large specimens might have a positive Size.)

Travelers can easily mistake a reek for a patch of muddy dirt, and reeks take full advantage of this. Their Camouflage skill represents their ability to "hide in plain sight." Humans or animals often become aware of a reek in their path by stepping in it. Anyone touching or touched by a reek becomes partly engulfed by its viscous body (its Binding ability) *and* is attacked by its acidic digestive secretions (its Innate Attack). Hence, victims find themselves stuck to the reek and taking 1 point of corrosive damage per turn, which eats through any DR at a rate of 1 point per 5 turns.

Most reeks cannot climb and are slow "ambush predators." They are fairly easy to destroy or evade once detected (though they have to be chopped apart or burned completely), and hence rely on concealment and surprise. Those reeks that *can* climb (add Climbing-12) use trees or cave walls as platforms from which to drop on visitors.

While reeks are usually assumed to have all the sapience of mud, they sometimes display a degree of what might be cunning or even an utterly alien intelligence. Some rare specimens have magical abilities powered by "mana" stored in their nuclei. These can cast one or two spells at level 15, and store up to 15 energy points for this purpose, recharging expended points at 1 per hour. It's generally assumed that they absorb such powers from digested magical beings or items.

ST 4; **DX** 5; **IQ** 2; **HT** 13.
HP 13**; Will** 8; **Per** 13; **Speed** 3.5; **Dodge** 6; **Move** 1.
SM 0; 40 lbs.

Traits: Binding 10 (Always On; Aura; Melee Attack, Reach C; One-Shot; Unbreakable); Blindness; Cold-Blooded (50°); Corrosion Attack 1 point (Always On; Aura; Melee Attack, Reach C); Discriminatory Smell; Doesn't Breathe (Oxygen Absorption); Doesn't Sleep; Dread (Bright Sunlight or Equivalent, 1 yard); Hard of Hearing; High Pain Threshold; Horizontal; Injury Tolerance (Homogenous, No Blood, Eyes, Head, or Neck); Invertebrate; No Fine Manipulators; No Legs (Slithers); Universal Digestion; Vibration Sense (Air); Wild Animal.
Skills: Brawling-10; Camouflage-12.

Striders

A huge, flightless bird, much of its 10 feet in its legs and neck, the strider has bristling hair-like feathers

Animal Handling and "Hybrids"

Creatures such as gryphons and hippogriffs can be trained using specializations of the Animal Handling skill, but nobody on Yrth currently teaches the correct skills for either of these beasts. Any attempts to train them are thus made at default from other specializations.

The versions which a would-be trainer might learn are Animal Handling (Raptor Hybrids), which defaults to Animal Handling (Raptors) at -3, Animal Handling (Feline Hybrids) which defaults to Animal Handling (Felines) at -3, or Animal Handling (Equine Hybrids), which defaults to Animal Handling (Equines) at -3. All other defaults for any of these three skills are at -6. See the notes for each animal for which specializations apply.

covering its elliptical body, though its serpentine neck and flat wedge-shaped head are bare. Though their favorite tactic is to run away, striders are *extremely* fast, and dangerous when cornered. Their heavy claws can kick out in a 2-hex radius – tales are told of striders disemboweling mounted knights – and their beaks are sharp and pointed, with the strong necks granting formidable striking power.

Striders are omnivores; in their native desert lands they use their beaks to dig up succulent tubers and small rodents. They can live in better country, but thrive in the wild only in the badlands of al-Haz and al-Wazif and the dry plains of Cardiel. They can be domesticated, but always remain stupid, skittish and dangerous. The applicable skill is Animal Handling (Giant Flightless Birds), which defaults to or from any other specialization at -6. Any failure by 4 or more on a roll against this skill means that the creature attacks its handler. Only magical control allows striders to be ridden.

The egg of a strider is over a foot in diameter and contains several gallons of fluid.

ST 20; **DX** 15; **IQ** 3; **HT** 11.
Will 10; **Per** 12; **Speed** 8; **Dodge** 11; **Move** 9.
SM +1; 1,000 lbs.

Traits: Enhanced Move 1 (Ground Speed 18); Long Legs and Neck (+1 SM); No Fine Manipulators; Peripheral Vision; Sharp Beak; Sharp Claws; Wild Animal.

Treetippers

Treetippers are hulking, unwieldy animals with long shaggy fur, four short, strong limbs ending in long, curved, blunt claws, and heavy tails which they use for balance. Heavy bone structures make them robust. They are slow-moving eaters of plants, insects and carrion – anything they can get their rake-like claws into. Their most common eating technique is to squat on their haunches next to a tree and use their forepaws to drag branches down into their mouths.

Treetippers have only their size, claws, and toughness to protect them.

They also occasionally bite if annoyed. They've become rare in Ytarria as the great forest vanished and human populations increased, and are now found only in the northern woodlands. They were once quite common in Caithness, where they were hunted with bows for food and sport.

ST 27; **DX** 10; **IQ** 3; **HT** 11.
HP 34; **Will** 10; **Per** 12; **Speed** 5.25; **Dodge** 8; **Move** 4.
SM +1 (4 hexes); 2,500 lbs.

Traits: Blunt Claws; DR 3; Semi-Upright; Temperature Tolerance 2; Wild Animal.

Unicorns

The unicorn resembles a slender horse with a goat's beard and a sharp, twisted, yard-long, pure white horn growing out of its forehead. It is a solitary, reclusive creature – most people will never see one, and no human has ever seen two together. It isn't sapient, and cannot speak any human language. Nor is it actually magical, except for its horn, although its speed and vitality can easily seem supernatural. The only known habitat for unicorns in Ytarria is the Great Forest.

Legends say that, in combat, the unicorn is the fiercest animal in nature, and no sound is more horrible than its braying. Most tales say that it can be killed but never captured, and that it can never be tamed. Some say that it has a weakness for female virgins, and will put its head on a virgin's lap and allow itself to be stroked until it falls asleep. At this point it may be captured, but capturing one will not win its friendship.

The unicorn's horn, or "alicorn," is reputed to have many magical abilities, including neutralizing any poison on contact. Alicorns are very rare and valuable; a genuine example would be worth at least $100,000. However, the unicorn is beloved of elves and sacred to various pagan cults who regard it is a symbol and emissary of the gods. Anyone known to be hunting this creature will find *himself* being hunted, by some *very* capable opponents, and anyone selling a "fresh" horn may have difficulty enjoying the profits. Most cults don't bother pursuing anyone with an old alicorn, most of which are fakes anyway. But they regard the topic as in rather bad taste, and a few may decide to discourage the trade. Cultists may seek out unicorns as a ritual act; merely sighting the creature is, for them, a mystical experience. Whether unicorns *are*, in fact, agents of a deity's will is left to GMs to determine.

Unicorns have uncanny senses and are very stealthy. If they detect anyone approaching, they usually steal away before they are even seen. If cornered, they will, as the legends suggest, fight viciously, though they will likely take the first opportunity to flee if the battle goes against them. A unicorn fights primarily with its horn, with which it can even parry, although it can also kick and bite like a horse.

ST 20; **DX** 15; **IQ** 5; **HT** 14.
Will 13; **Per** 18; **Speed** 9; **Dodge** 12; **Move** 9.
SM +1 (3 hexes); 1,000 lbs.

Traits: Enhanced Move 1 (Ground Speed 18); Hooves; Quadruped; Impaling Striker (Long, +1 SM); Weak Bite; Wild Animal.
Skills: Brawling-18; Stealth-18.

Wyverns

A wyvern is a dragon-like beast with two legs, wings, a serpentine body, and a long, barbed, poison-tipped tail. Like dragons, wyverns are fierce predators and fly well. However, they aren't sapient and have no breath weapon; they're also slow on the ground. They are solitary diurnal creatures which seldom come close to civilized lands. Those that do are quickly hunted down. They are common in forested mountain areas, however, especially the Firuz region of al-Haz.

A wyvern will usually strike with its tail from above, then land to grapple and carry off its prey. The tail does relatively limited damage, making wyverns less effective against well-armored opponents. However, they have the tactical sense to *slam* tough foes to take them out of the fight for a while. Note that wyvern venom causes both HP loss (half of which can be avoided with a HT-5 roll) and DX reduction (also resisted with a HT-5 roll).

ST 19; **DX** 13; **IQ** 5; **HT** 12.
Will 10; **Per** 12; **Speed** 6.25; **Dodge** 9; **Move** 3.
SM +3 (10 hexes); 950 lbs.

Traits: Affliction 6 (-4 DX Penalty; Extended Duration ×1,000; Follow-Up, Striker); DR 3; Enhanced Move 1/2 (Air Speed 18); Flight (Winged; Air Move 12); No Fine Manipulators; Sharp Claws; Sharp Teeth; Impaling Striker (Tail; Weak); Toxic Attack 1d (Follow-Up, Striker; Resistible, HT-5); Wild Animal.
Skills: Brawling-15.

Dragons

Huge, intelligent, and impossibly long-lived, dragons are fire-breathing creatures of terrible beauty. They are, by all available accounts, native to Yrth . . . at least, there are no reliable reports of a time before the dragons. Given their blatantly magical nature, they may well have been the product, accidental or deliberate, of some ancient age of high magic. If the dragons themselves know, they aren't telling.

Dragons have two sexes, but distinguishing a male from a female is an exercise for the scholarly or the foolhardy. Dragons mate infrequently, sometimes impelled by erratic instinct but oftener in pursuit of political alliance; their clutches number up to a dozen eggs. A newly hatched dragon, about the size of a man, is fully mobile, self-sufficient, and fluent in its racial language. Some dragons never make it out of the shell; wyrm eggs are powerfully magical, and insanely brave adventurers sometimes steal them for sale to mages.

A newly hatched dragon sets out to find its own territory. Most hatchlings perish at the hands of humans, dwarves, monsters, or other dragons, but the smartest and luckiest survive.

Dragons grow, age, and ripen in wisdom as long as they live. They never weaken or fall to senility; they are said to be immortal, succumbing only to violence. Exceptionally magical creatures, they learn spells from each other, and occasionally from powerful wizards of other races. The potential rewards of such arrangements can persuade dragons to traffic with lesser beings, and humans to risk dealing with creatures that could swallow them in two bites. Dragons also learn by research and experiments, in which case they may employ or enslave humanoid servitors to take care of tedious details or simply to provide hands. An adult dragon may know dozens of spells, but they often focus on high skill rather than acquiring a wide range. While they can use words and gestures of their claws and tails to cast spells, some prefer to learn them to skill 20 or better, so that they can cast them subtly, without overt rituals.

Except for Magery itself, their powers are not affected by low or high mana, but they suffer horrendously in no-mana areas, quickly sickening and eventually dying. However, many *prefer* low-mana areas because wizards are less likely to attack them there. Dragons are thus most often found in the Ring Islands, the Great Forest, and the northern parts of the Whitehood Mountains. They tend to live in mountainous areas but will take up residence anywhere that interests them. Some are rumored to be able to take other forms and live among the more social races (see pp. 145, 153). Whether they do so for political reasons, personal preferences, or simply sport is usually unknown.

Dragons could never be common. It takes a large territory to feed one; a full-grown dragon can eat two cows a week and will prey on elephants for variety. Even a hatchling eats as much as a man. They can reduce their needs by deliberately placing themselves in a kind of extended torpor, but most feel unsafe doing this for long: enemies might take advantage. Most nurse a fondness for treasure, but this can take the form of violent greed, refined connoisseurship, or miserly paranoia. A few eventually rise above such seemingly crass instincts.

Dragons are intelligent enough to understand the long-term limits on their food supply, territorial enough to dislike having other dragons nearby, and far too proud to adopt ideas such as agriculture. Those who live too close together inevitably fight, usually sooner rather than later . . . but "sooner" for dragons may be a long time in human terms, as rivals watch for advantage and negotiate with other neighbors. Dragons are quite willing to gang up on each other, but the negotiations . . . who gets first pick of the target's hoard, who gets how much of his lands . . . can take decades. This

partly explains the relative lack of truly ancient dragons – the youngsters eventually mob them.

Still, dragons do have a society. Every dragon past hatchling age knows every other dragon, at least by reputation, and at times they meet peacefully . . . to plot, to share knowledge, or just to have the company of a near-equal.

Dragons rob men of land and cattle, dwarves of caves and gold, elves of forest and game. Most of the sentient races thus regard them as enemies. Even in ancient times, the dragon population was kept low by territorial squabbles and the occasional elven or dwarven hero seeking revenge. Since the Banestorm, dragons have gradually been exterminated in populated regions. No young dragon can hope to survive long in human lands; only a mature wyrm dropping in unexpectedly is likely to overcome the local warriors. Such a monster may even settle down and grow fat, pillaging at night or demanding tribute.

Most dragons are intelligent enough *not* to pursue this strategy, since champions eventually come to do battle. If nineteen die fiery deaths, still the twentieth appears. Or, worse, a human army with magical support will lay siege to its lair. Sooner or later, the dragon must return to the wilderness, find new lands to terrorize – or die. Scholars estimate that around 500 dragons live on Yrth, but given the complexities of dragon society, the ease which which they can fly great distances, and the fact that many may be hibernating in secluded lairs, no one can be at all certain.

Dealing with Dragons

Not all dragons are hostile marauders; some are willing to talk. People take some convincing that such dragons are sincere, but it happens. Motivations vary from dragon to dragon: some care only for food and treasure, while others see the benefits of bargaining and cooperation – or at least, of employing humanoid agents. Although a human army is one of the few things a dragon really fears, they can sometimes be persuaded to participate in wars. Legends even speak of great heroes who *rode* dragons into battle. Dragons' oaths, not lightly given, can almost always be trusted; they *are* proud creatures, and a reputation for unreliability makes things difficult over the centuries.

The best way to approach a dragon is to be very polite and offer treasure. Food is welcome, but only a young or very hungry dragon will be mollified by that alone. Threats are likely to be met with anger and violence.

Incidentally, dwarves are the one race which trusts dragons less than humanity does. Reptile men, on the other hand, regard them with respect, which is returned in full; in addition to its Reputation, reptile men ignore a dragon's Social Stigma.

For more information on using dragons in games, see ***GURPS Dragons.***

Templates

Because every dragon should be treated as a distinct individual with unique abilities and interests, the species is presented here as a set of racial templates, each covering a size and age range. Note that all values are guidelines, not hard rules; a dragon may be large or small, fat or thin, clever or stupid for its age.

The Dragon Meta-Trait

All Yrth dragons have the following features: Perception +2 [10]; Crushing Striker (Tail; Long, +1 SM; Cannot Parry) [8]; Dependency (Mana, Very Common, Constantly) [-25]; Extra Legs (Four Legs) [5]; Flight (Winged, -25%) [30]; Horizontal [-10]; Loner (15) [-2]; Magery 3 [35]; No Fine Manipulators [-30]; Reputation ("cave-horror, worst of gold-thieves"; -2 among dwarves) [-5]; Reputation ("noblest of the scaled ones"; +1 among reptile men) [1]; Social Stigma (Monster) [-15]; Unaging [15]. *17 points.*

All dragons also have claws, teeth, armor, and (usually) flaming breath, and most have other features in common, but these details vary with age.

Hatchling

29 points

An infant dragon, perhaps fresh out of the egg, is around 6'-7' long, and weighs 150-200 lbs.

Attribute Modifiers: ST +3 (No Fine Manipulators, -40%; [18]; DX -1 [-20]; HT +2 [20].

Secondary Characteristic Modifiers: Basic Speed -1 [-20].

Advantages: Dragon [17]; Burning Attack 1d (Costs Fatigue, 2 FP, -10%; Jet, +0%; Reduced Range, 1/5, -20%) [4]; DR 1 (Can't Wear Armor, -40%) [3]; Nictitating Membrane 1 [1]; Sharp Claws [5]; Sharp Teeth [1].

Young Dragon

133 points

This is a dragon of about 20 years old, which has survived the perilous hatchling phase and is probably establishing a lair. It is a 4-hex creature weighing 500-800 lbs.

Attribute Modifiers: ST +8 (No Fine Manipulators, -40%; Size, -10%) [40]; DX +1 (No Fine Manipulators, -40%) [12]; IQ +1 [20]; HT +3 [30].

Secondary Characteristic Modifiers: SM +1; FP +2 [6]; Basic Speed -1 [-20].

Advantages: Dragon [17]; Burning Attack 1d (Costs Fatigue, 2 FP, -10%; Jet, +0%; Reduced Range, 1/2, -10%) [4]; DR 2 (Can't Wear Armor, -40%) [6]; Metabolism Control 2 [10]; Nictitating Membrane 2 [2]; Sharp Claws [5]; Sharp Teeth [1].

Adolescent Dragon

234 points

This specimen is perhaps a century old, probably established both in its lair and in draconic society. It is a 7-hex creature weighing 800-1,500 lbs.

Attribute Modifiers: ST +13 (No Fine Manipulators, -40%; Size, -20%) [52]; DX +2 (No Fine Manipulators, -40%) [24]; IQ +2 [40]; HT +3 [30].

Secondary Characteristic Modifiers: SM +2; FP +5 [15].

Advantages: Dragon [17]; Burning Attack 2d (Breath; Costs 2 Fatigue; Jet; Range 5) [8]; DR 3 (Can't Wear Armor, -40%) [9]; Metabolism Control 6 [30]; Nictitating Membrane 3 [3]; Sharp Claws [5]; Sharp Teeth [1].

Adult Dragon

338 points

This is a dragon after several centuries, a 10-hex monster weighing 1,500-2,500 lbs., with little to fear except draconic rivals or very powerful heroes.

Attribute Modifiers: ST +16 (No Fine Manipulators, -40%; Size, -30%) [48]; DX +3 (No Fine Manipulators, -40%) [36]; IQ +4 [80]; HT +4 [40].

Secondary Characteristic Modifiers: SM +3; FP +10 [30].

Advantages: Dragon [17]; Burning Attack 3d (Breath; Costs 2 Fatigue; Jet) [14]; DR 6 (Can't Wear Armor, -40%) [18]; Fangs [2]; Metabolism Control 8 [40]; Nictitating Membrane 5 [5]; Talons [8].

Monstrous Dragon

444 points

This represents a truly legendary firedrake, quite likely more than a thousand years old – and probably a little strange. It has grown to 14+ hexes in size and 3,000+ lbs.

Attribute Modifiers: ST +22 (No Fine Manipulators, -40%; Size, -40%) [44]; DX +4 (No Fine Manipulators, -40%) [48]; IQ +6 [120]; HT +5 [50].

Secondary Characteristic Modifiers: SM +4; FP +20 [60].

Advantages: Dragon [17]; Burning Attack 4d (Breath; Costs 2 Fatigue; Jet) [18]; DR 7 (Can't Wear Armor, -40%) [21]; Fangs [2]; Long Talons [11]; Metabolism Control 9 [45]; Nictitating Membrane 6 [6]; Reputation ("Embodiment of the Infinite"; +1 among elves) [2].

Legends speak of even greater dragons than this, millennia old, with almost unlimited power. If such creatures exist on Yrth, they rarely choose to act, preferring to sit, watch, and think unimaginable thoughts.

Dragons in Combat

Dragons fight *intelligently*, though some may succumb to atavistic battle-fury. They use claws, teeth, strength, and any applicable spells as well as breath weapons; older dragons make more use of flame, as they not only have better range, but can spare more fatigue. Anyone attacking a dragon from behind is likely to become the target of a tail swipe; dragons will often aim low, to sweep an opponent's legs – or horse – out from under him, buying the dragon time to deal with any foes to the front.

Variant Dragons

In addition to draconic monsters such as wyverns (p. 226), there are occasional reports of dragon-like monsters on Yrth which do not fit the standard pattern. These may be magical mutants, or Banestorm victims from some other world. A few seem to be simply "deficient" dragons; for example, some seem to be born without the ability to breathe flame, but survive to adulthood anyway, thanks to raw strength, cunning, or magic. It is said that some dragons pursue unusual magical paths which radically affect their physique, giving them an exotic appearance and strange powers.

Most "variant dragons" lack wings and flame; some have the Constriction Attack advantage, or possess either powerful venomous bites (a Toxic Attack with Follow-Up) or the ability to spit venom (a Corrosive or Toxic Attack with Jet and often Contact Agent). A few are amphibious; some even prefer life underwater.

Dragons as PCs

Dragons are intelligent and adaptable, which theoretically makes them usable as PCs. However, they're also large, powerful, and regarded with extreme concern by most other species, which limits their usefulness in many types of campaign. Even a low-point hatchling has little chance of surviving in contact with humanity (or goblins, or orcs, or dwarves, or dark elves) . . . and the humanoid races are everywhere now.

Draconic characters will probably be most comfortable in traditional "sword and sorcery" wilderness adventures, in which hardened fighters of all shapes and sizes battle monsters and bandits in search of treasure and glory, or "all-dragon" games dealing with relationships and politics within dragon society. If the GM has suggested such a campaign, it's generally unfair to force players to try to get along in human civilization very often or for very long, but the occasional scenario in which such dragons are forced to deal with the limitations of their form and nature can be amusing. See ***GURPS Dragons*** for a great deal more information, and p. 145 for an example of a dragon character hiding in human society.

Domestic Animals

As whole villages were carried through the Banestorm, Yrth humans naturally breed many familiar animals. Some native species have also been domesticated. Few other intelligent beings on Yrth share the human interest in domestic animals (one of humanity's major advantages), and those who do have mostly borrowed both human techniques and human-domesticated species. See p. B459-460 for details of several species.

Camels

The Arab-descended tribes of southern Ytarria still know the value of the camel in desert environments – and still curse whenever they have to

Small Domesticated Animals

In addition to the larger species described here, Yrthian farmers and herders keep a large variety of small creatures, mostly of Earth origin. Chickens, cats, and pigs (especially smaller breeds) are widespread, and one sometimes encounters more exotic species, at least as pets. Breeders keep pigeons and doves for meat, usually in the attics of large houses or in free-standing dovecotes. In addition, carrier pigeons are used, both as routine letter-carriers to inconvenient locations and to get messages in and out of besieged fortresses.

Dogs are common, and while the breeds found on Yrth would be unfamiliar on Earth, their basic functions – herding, hunting, guard duty, occasionally as pets – ensure that the general range of shapes and sizes is much the same. The Sahudese breed one type as a food animal, although it's an expensive delicacy. Knights and nobles in Christian areas often value their hunting hounds very highly, while Muslims despise all dogs as unclean scavengers.

The sport of falconry is also common, with several types of bird (some native, some from Earth) in widespread use. Which types see use depends on the prey and local customs. In Megalos, there are strict laws governing which social classes can fly which birds. Besieging armies sometimes employ falconers to intercept their enemies' carrier pigeons.

persuade the swaying, spitting beasts to do anything.

Aside from their ability to go for days without water, the virtue of camels is that they can be laden far more heavily than a horse of similar size, albeit with their usual lack of good nature. However, unlike horses, they will not permit themselves to be worked to death.

Cattle

Cattle of various kinds are found in many parts of Ytarria, often being used to pull ploughs or heavy loads, or as a source of milk. They are also bred for meat, although beef is a luxury in most lands. Use the oxen stats on p. B460; milk cows are a little smaller and weaker.

Hardings

Hardings are goat-like creatures native to Yrth. They have short, thick tusks curling beside their mouths, used to dig food out of otherwise inaccessible spots. They thrive in the most dismal areas, seemingly able to eat anything that nature offers. Hardings provide a thin, nutritious milk (often made into harding cheese), a long wiry fur that can be woven into warm cloth (harding wool), and a tough, chewy meat whose taste unfavorably compares to that of leather.

ST 11; **DX** 11; **IQ** 3; **HT** 12.
Will 11; **Per** 12; **Speed** 5.75; **Dodge** 8; **Move** 7.
SM +0 (1 hex); 180 lbs.

Traits: Crushing Striker (Tusks; Cannot Parry); Domestic Animal; Hooves; Peripheral Vision; Quadruped; Weak Bite.
Skills: Survival (Mountain)-12.
Cost: $400.

Horses

Horses are as important for transport and warfare on Yrth as they ever were elsewhere. All the types described on p. B459-460 exist; armored knights ride heavy warhorses, while skirmishers favor lighter, faster mounts, and some tribesmen and scouts use something close to a pony, for agility and versatility. Mules are indispensable to merchants.

Milkfish

Milkfish are not actually fish, but large mammals which live in shallow, sandy places along seashores, grazing on seaweed. They have squat, ugly faces covered with whiskers, thick, bony front limbs used for digging and balancing themselves in the water (reach C, and cannot kick effectively), and long, lumpy bodies which end in a flat whale-like tail. Their hide is tough and leathery, with thick blubber underneath. Their only attack is an ineffectual tail-slap.

Milkfish are easy to domesticate, given a little ingenuity. Enterprising herders have found that, in addition to the rich milk that gives them their name, their meat is tender and tasty, and the fatty layer underneath the tough outer skin provides useful oils.

ST 26; **DX** 9; **IQ** 3; **HT** 11.
Will 10; **Per** 12; **Speed** 3; **Dodge** 6; **Move** 3.
SM +1 (3 hexes); 2,200 lbs.

Traits: Amphibious; Breath-Holding 4; Cannot Kick; Crushing Striker (Tail; Clumsy -2; Weak); Domestic Animal; DR 3; Enhanced Move 1 (Water Speed 6); Horizontal; No Fine Manipulators; Pressure Support 1; Temperature Tolerance 2; Vibration Sense (Water); Weak Bite.
Cost: $800.

Woolens (Blacksheep)

Woolens (or "blacksheep") are small grazing beasts, closely resembling sheep. Always black, their fleece is thick, fine, and easily spun, making it a favorite textile throughout Ytarria. Their meat is delicious. They're actually preferred to sheep by most farmers – for their exceptional vigor if nothing else – though enough people prefer the Earth species, or value its white wool, that sheep are still bred and raised.

ST 9; **DX** 13; **IQ** 3; **HT** 12.
Will 10; **Per** 12; **Speed** 6.25; **Dodge** 9; **Move** 8.
SM +0 (1 hex); 100 lbs.

Traits: Domestic Animal; Hooves; Peripheral Vision; Quadruped; Weak Bite.
Cost: $300.

Chapter Seven
Campaigns on Yrth

The doors of the throne room burst open, and Varlak the Northman led his band in at the rush. An ogre guard charged from the shadows, axe raised high, but fell with a pair of elven arrows in its heart. Varlak looked around, his blade ready, but saw no other foes.

"Where are you, necromancer?" he demanded, gesturing with the amulet in his left hand. "Your spells cannot work now! You have taken too much of my life to escape me! I would see the face of the one I am sworn to kill!"

"And what harm have I done you?" The taunting voice – familiar to Varlak from magical sendings – echoed from the far end of the room, where darkness seemed to gather round the shadowed throne. Calm and even-pitched, it gave nothing away about the speaker.

*Bows instantly turned that way, but Varlak snapped out a command to hold. He wanted truths before he had his vengeance. "What **harm**?" he cried. "Ten long years ago, your orc pets burned a village on the coast of Araterre. Perhaps you have forgotten; they were just another few deaths among many, for a necromancer. But that village was home to the woman who owned my heart. Since then I have followed your trail across deserts and seas, and foiled a dozen of your schemes – today, you will pay for that murder."*

"Ah, yes. I do remember." Suddenly the voice was no longer calm or even; it was amused. Just as suddenly, the shadows diminished. The necromancer leaned forward, and smiled – a smile which Varlak had held sacred for so many long years. "It was a dull little village, and I so needed to escape it. My greetings again, beloved, and my thanks; your passion flatters me . . ."

Yrth is designed as a setting, not just for scenarios, but for *campaigns* . . . extended sequences of stories with the same heroes and many of the same villains. This chapter looks at some ways of creating these epics.

Game Styles

To begin with, any campaign will have a style or "flavor." This may shift from scenario to scenario – one may be tragic, another comic, another melodramatic, and so on – but it's usually wise to aim for some consistency, if only so players can create appropriate characters. For example, noble swordsmen and combat mages work well in high fantasy tales of spectacular battles and epic quests, but may be out of place in subtle stories of urban intrigue and moral ambiguity, while self-indulgent rogues and whimsical scholars, totally appropriate for comic low-fantasy games, may not look quite right in dark, horrific scenarios.

High Fantasy

High fantasy is the "grandest" form of the genre, full of great quests and enigmatic magic. This might not seem to fit too well on Yrth, with its realistic edge and fairly well-documented spells – but that's just a question of attitude.

Perhaps the most important key to running high fantasy is that the PCs (and their opponents) should be powerful, with high point values. They may well have access to the full range of magical powers. That makes them

exceptional on Yrth, but they're *supposed* to stand out from the crowd. Still, the GM is fully entitled to keep some wonders in reserve for later.

Possible settings for high fantasy include the Ring Islands and the wilder margins of Cardiel, both of which support potent magic, weird monsters, and titanic conflicts. However, it's also possible to run a chivalric high fantasy game in low-mana Caithness, especially given the presence of higher-mana "hot spots" occupied by powerful, unpredictable wizards. The knight in shining armor is a potent high fantasy image too.

Low Fantasy

As an Earthlike world where magic is fairly well understood and doesn't *seem* to have affected the landscape too much, Yrth is eminently suited to "low fantasy" games. Caithness is especially suitable; low local mana keeps magic constrained. However, other regions serve just as well, if easily employed magic is kept under control by the relative scarcity of mages and the inherent risks of critical spell-casting failures. For most people living in Tredroy or Megalos or Bannock, the routine concerns of life are much like those of our own world: getting a job, making friends, paying taxes. If people have occasional dealings with magicians or goblins, that makes life more varied, but they don't see it as truly *strange*. Likewise for them, adventuring may be a risky career which promises high returns, or an uncomfortable necessity when faced with a war or a monster.

Low fantasy PCs can have low starting point values and limited access to spells (which they may still understand and use to full effect). However, it's also possible to have competent, wealthy, or high-status heroes in such tales, so higher point values may be reasonable. It's not *powerful* characters as such who break the low fantasy mold, it's *weird* ones. A mystical Buddhist monk is a reasonable character for a game of social intrigue set in Sahud, but in a Cardien village which is suffering from troll attacks and an inept local lord, he's just going to confuse the issue. If players want to run a wide range of strange characters, it's better to opt for high fantasy or sword and sorcery.

Sword and Sorcery

The classic sword-and-sorcery tales put the swords in the hands of the heroes, who are often barbarian warriors, while keeping magic mysterious and rather sinister – mostly a tool for villains. More sophisticated treatments allow more sorcery on the heroic side, while still keeping it weird and a little bit dubious. The emphasis on action means that PC wizards should wield a few quick, effective offensive and defensive spells, lest they fall to the charge of some pesky barbarian foe. Alternatively, they can be good with a blade, keeping subtle magics as their ace in the hole.

One snag with sword and sorcery in Ytarria is that most of the land surface has been explored, and much of it is under cultivation. There's little true wilderness in which to rampage. Still, there are the forests of central Ytarria, and the strange lands to the west and south. Moreover, those swordsmen need civilizations to visit and plunder; decadent empires are very much part of the style. In fact, sword and sorcery plots can be set almost anywhere on the continent; the attitude is more important than the immediate geography.

That said, some areas are especially appropriate. The Nomad Lands are the place for brawny-thewed swordsmen to come *from*, while Bilit Island is a land of hulking temples where bloody cults worship dark gods – heroes should visit at least once to tear down an idol while misappropriating a sack of gems. Araterre produces more *sophisticated* fighters, with lighter blades and nicer manners, but if they choose to wander the world testing themselves against fell sorcery, that's fine. Tredroy is a real sword-and-sorcery city, with its excessive sophistication, divided government, and wealthy merchants in dire need of hired guards to protect them against master thieves. The city of Megalos, on the other hand, is more dangerous – a place of gladiatorial arenas, power-crazed rulers, and ruthlessly *efficient* magics.

Dark Fantasy

"Dark fantasy" is primarily a matter of *mood*. Magic in this style is especially mysterious and shadowy. It might be limited to NPCs, or PCs might have a few spells as defenses against supernatural evil. Alternately, they might learn magic "to fight fire with fire," at perpetual risk to their souls.

Yrth is a good setting for dark fantasy campaigns, but setting them up requires a degree of judgment. The PCs should start at modest power levels, though not so modest that they become victims for the first monster or black magician they meet. Their access to magic may be subject to GM veto. It's probably important that they have quick wits, and the wisdom to know when to duck or run. Dark fantasy *punishes* stubborn heroism, though it rewards strong will combined with sensible judgment.

Mixed Styles

It's perfectly possible for a campaign to mix and match styles, especially between scenarios. For example, a low fantasy saga might include horrific, downbeat incidents that take it into the realm of dark fantasy, while lighter moments in a sword and sorcery campaign can tip over into comedy. It's even possible for, say, a high fantasy game to feature moments of low fantasy, when the magic in use is limited and "homely" and the issues at stake are more personal, permitting some low-key character development. This is fine; it gives the game a sense of "light and shade" instead of a flat single-note style.

It's also entirely possible for a campaign to gradually change from style to style as it goes along. If both the GM and all the players understand that this is what's happening and agree to the change, this can be a good way to avoid boredom and burnout.

Such games can be set in most parts of Ytarria, but the GM should portray the setting appropriately. For example, dark fantasy set in Caithness features shadowy woods filled with unknown creatures. Peasants huddle in their huts as *things* circle the firelight, and half-mad wizards squat in impenetrable towers studying blasphemous tomes. The knights and aristocrats are either arrogant and amoral, locked in a pointless civil war that's devastating the countryside, or underpowered and uncertain, trying to care for their peasants in the face of unknowable threats from all sides. Likewise, the Muslim nations become lands of "Arabian gothic" strangeness, Tredroy is a city of dark alleys, ruthless assassins, and brutal feuds, and the Nomad Lands are full of sudden, meaningless death and bloodthirsty cults. Megalos requires few changes; it's a dark empire, built on slavery and conquest, now ruled by a demonic emperor and "protected" by religious fanatics.

Epic Fantasy

The great ages of building and conquest in Ytarria are over . . . or so it appears. But the heroes of truly epic fantasy make their own plots. A great revolution in Megalos, an attempt to establish a land-based trade route from Caithness to Sahud, or an expedition to seek out new continents across the great oceans (or an invasion *from* such a continent) could all provide backgrounds for Ytarrian epics. For that matter, campaigns could take place in Yrth's past, when building and exploration were the orders of the day, and the stuff of modern legend. Epics can thus start almost anywhere, and will very likely sweep across the map, taking in several nations, huge casts of NPCs, and a range of subplots.

Epic characters don't have to be *terribly* powerful to start with, but are generally competent or promising from the first; thus, starting point values for PCs can be moderate, but experience awards should support *serious* growth.

Comic Fantasy

Comedy can take many forms. Yrth isn't a *frivolous* place – death is generally very permanent, magic is rarely used for trivial purposes, and stories aren't guaranteed to have happy endings – but events there can easily become ironic or ridiculous. This is, for example, a good setting for *social* comedy, in which laughter comes from misunderstandings between characters, and human vanity and folly drive the plot.

So – fresh-faced barbarians out of the north blunder through the streets of Tredroy, where the legal system changes when you cross the river, and the assassins have a union. Megalan nobles who haven't been "home" for decades argue fine points of etiquette at court, while completely ignoring the peculiar behavior of their emperor. Surly dwarves measure their long lives entirely in terms of ironmongery. Visits to Sahud and Araterre can involve silly (Asian or French) accents and weird local customs. Also, while Ytarria isn't a parody of Earth in general, one or two locations are in fact based on places close to home, and GMs are welcome to set up satiric metaphors for Earth politics.

Examples

The following are just a few from the near-infinite range of possible ***GURPS Banestorm*** campaigns using the various styles discussed above.

Grabbing the Ring

To set up this "high fantasy resource management" plot, the GM should ask the players to create a group of competent, ambitious, footloose PCs, preferably including some skilled in magic or strategy, ideally already acquainted and perhaps allied, who all find themselves in Araterre. Then, the PCs are offered the chance to acquire power and glory.

It seems that one of the uninhabited Ring Islands is close enough to inhabited parts of the archipelago to be viable for settlement, large enough to support a decent community, and not *too* monster-infested. A brief survey suggests that the local mana level is relatively stable – and the Prince would like to see it settled and fortified as a base for actions against certain pirates. He offers to provide aid and resources, and will reward success, eventually, with noble titles.

All the PCs have to do is put together a colonial expedition, drive off a few supernatural monsters, build fortifications, hold off the pirates, learn more about the ancient secrets of the Ring

Learning From History

While Yrth is a fantasy world, many of the details are based on Earth's own history, justified either by ideas carried through the Banestorm, or by parallel social evolution. GMs seeking to add to the setting are thus encouraged to draw on real history.

Certainly, if the GM wants to develop details of, say, the feudal system in Caithness, Islamic law in al-Haz, or navigation methods in Araterre, historical reference books are a good place to start. Good ones will be full of the odd snippets that provide verisimilitude. GMs should avoid becoming *too* bogged down in research, though – players may become bored if every session turns into a lecture on the contrast between the feudal duties of fief-holding villeins in 13th-century Bavaria and those in 21st-century Caithness. It's equally important to make it clear that resemblances only go so far. Nothing can be "wrong" in an Yrth game just because "it wasn't like that in medieval Europe." Despite being strongly conservative, Yrth culture has inevitably evolved and adapted in its own way over the centuries.

History is handy for plot and character ideas, too. The stories of, say, 17th-century piracy are full of characters and incidents which could be echoed in the outer parts of Araterre, while anyone telling a story about the conflicts between al-Wazif and Megalos should certainly read up on our world's Crusades.

Islands, wheedle funds out of the Prince's penny-pinching chancellor, and occasionally visit the court to make sure that the Prince remembers their efforts and their rivals don't spread too many nasty rumors.

War Games

The basis for this dark fantasy campaign is a gritty tale of frontier warfare in western Megalos, as the Empire marches to battle yet again. The PCs start out as idealistic, or at least straightforward, members of the Legions, or of some noble's retinue, and gradually lose their ideals to the creeping realization that things aren't like the sagas. Honor is often compromised and victory is rarely entirely glorious. Worse, as time goes on, it becomes clear that the enemies aren't all on the other side of the border. Behind the soldiers' backs there are not only inhuman monsters, but human ones – in every level of the command structure.

The campaign would combine darkness of mood with the bloodshed of warfare. It would start with conventional "war is hell" grittiness, and then go a step beyond that into realms of supernatural horror, hinting that the hellishness of this war may be *literal*. At the same time, supernatural horrors can serve as a metaphor for the too-human brutality of warfare. If some fighters are literally mindless zombies, others might fear that harsh discipline and fatigue are pushing them towards a condition little better. It's an old but valid idea that the worst horrors of all may be those we inflict upon ourselves.

Beware of Black Powder

The "gunpowder ban" is a major, if largely passive, feature of Ytarrian society, and some players, on studying the setting, may be keen to play underground engineers or knowledgeable Banestorm victims. Others may be interested in playing agents of Serendipity or similar roles.

All this is fine, and is covered in this book. However, GMs should be aware that the active presence of gunpowder and other advanced technology, however limited and suppressed, is likely to change the feel of a campaign quite radically. Some people may even find that it completely destroys the fantasy atmosphere for them. Note also that anyone exhibiting high-tech equipment in public on Yrth will draw the attention of more dangerous, competent, and nervous people than even a PC should want to have to deal with.

Hence, GMs should only incorporate this theme in a game after careful thought. If it would be too distracting, ignore it. Assume that the ban is fully effective, or even that gunpowder just doesn't work on Yrth. Prohibit PCs from knowing how to make it. The whole subject is just one (albeit logical) feature of Yrth, and can be brought into the spotlight or shuffled into the background as necessary.

Forest Fief

This is a low fantasy campaign for players who like to start small but grow bigger. The PCs should be a group of friends from humble backgrounds, who start play in Caithness.

They find themselves recruited as the defensive force for a run-down fief on the edge of the Great Forest. There are monster lairs to clean out, passing nonhumans to befriend (or fend off), and the delicate problem of not taking sides in that intermittent civil war. The GM needn't emphasize the fine details of feudal administration, but might offer opportunities for social climbing, encouraging the players to spend some experience points on Reputations and Status. Ultimately, some of the party may be offered knighthoods and the chance to hold the fief in their own right, when its current absentee lord either wins big or loses disastrously in the game of Caithness politics. This can move them into a larger realm of politics and alliances. Note that feudal careers can include such concerns as marriage (either romantic or political) and the acquisition of loyal, competent guard forces (perhaps as Ally Groups).

Out of the Storm

This campaign is set in the past, a couple of decades after the Banestorm first strikes, with the PCs – all high-powered characters, great heroes emerging from the time of chaos – having a free hand to carve out their own kingdoms. But the point isn't just military glory or resource management; it's soap opera. The physical heroism should be matched by grand passions and vaunting ambition. While combat skills, magic, and military strategy were required for the characters to *reach* their starting positions and preserve them against orcs or bandits, social skills and deviousness will now take them further.

Three Laws, One Problem

The PCs are recruited by the City Council of Tredroy to deal with supernatural problems affecting the whole city. This is a new post, but the idea has been accepted by all three of the city's governors, who have instructed their respective watch forces to cooperate with the PCs. In brief, they're to be freelance exorcists and pest control officers, in a world where "pests" may be magical, monstrous, or both. The Council is organizing this because such problems do not respect borders.

At least, that's the story when the PCs are recruited. It rapidly becomes clear that the truth has slightly more nuance. None of the three governors are entirely happy with this scheme (the Council called in a lot of favors to get their grudging consent). Their respective watch forces are fully aware of the fact, and may not be cooperative. Someone ambitious on the Council wants to extend its authority into law enforcement generally, and is using the PCs as a stalking-horse. Half the problems the heroes face seem to be kobold pranks, and the other half are apparently world-threatening demonic incursions. Further, several leading figures in Tredroy's supernatural community are unhappy at this new inconvenience . . .

Merchant Ventures

Not all epics are about war or pride. When the merchant class is on the rise, long-distance travel may have a simple, honest motive . . . profit.

In this campaign, the PCs start in Yibyorak; hence, some or all of them may be goblins. They are hired to open new trade routes on behalf of various local merchants. This could mean a land expedition around the Blackwoods and north to Zarak, boating up the Ekmekyk Canal to research trading possibilities on the far shores of Lake Acheron, or sea voyages to the far reaches of Araterre or along the coasts of al-Wazif and Cardiel – perhaps risking the fringes of the Maelstrom and the attitudes of the locals to make contacts in al-Haz.

Barbarian Heroes – the Early Years

This is basic sword and sorcery. Wandering from their northern homelands to the Djinn Lands or Bilit Island, a band of swordsmen and hedge witches try to comprehend the wonders of Yrth, and perhaps make a profit along the way. Eventually, the heroes may become bored with picaresque roving, stop trampling thrones and actually take one over – or go home to show off their loot and deal with the people who threw them out in the first place. Or they may just keep going . . .

The Policies of Heaven

Campaigns in Sahud should combine color and strangeness in the local culture and the personal style of the protagonists, with considerable subtlety in their political maneuvers and their use of magic. High war makes things even more complicated, and the local spirits are unpredictable. What, then, if those two factors are combined?

In this campaign, the PCs are associated with a Sahudese clan whose luck appears to have turned for the worse. Houses burn down, crops fail, and bizarre accidents dog its leaders. Some of these problems involve low-status human antagonists, but when they are captured or investigated, they prove to be mercenaries, and their employers seem impossible to trace.

Eventually, just before the clan's collective face is entirely destroyed, investigations bear fruit. It seems that the clan is being challenged to high war – by a group of *spirits*. Obviously, given the status of such beings, it is hard to refuse the challenge, although it would be useful to know why it has been issued. The clan's champions will have to be exceptionally ingenious, flexible, and versatile to handle the matter with propriety.

Border Patrol

Lastly, any number of campaigns can be set in places where two lands and cultures meet, and either clash or rub along together. Whether the heroes are dwarves guarding the caverns of Zarak against orc, human, and insect man incursions, Wazifi border guards watching for Hospitaller incursions while suffering goading from Kharijites at their backs, or a Cardien coast patrol on the watch for Aralaise pirates, they will have to be prepared to fight when there is no other choice – but they'll probably survive longer if they're willing to negotiate, or at least if they understand their opponents. Indeed, it may sometimes feel that they have as much in common with the warriors across the frontier as with the complacent, scheming masses on their own side.

The PCs

Stories require not only settings and plots, but characters; this is where the PCs come in. The questions to settle here are who these people are, and why they get involved in adventures.

Professional Adventurers

The simplest and most traditional answer is that they're adventurers by profession. There are plenty of such people on Yrth; exiled warriors from the Nomad Lands, younger sons of the gentry turned knight-errant, secretive wizards tired of hiding in the cities of al-Haz, professional thieves from Tredroy, and so on. While adventuring is risky, and sometimes merely a euphemism for mercenary service, banditry, or vagabondage, the potential rewards for the luckiest and most skilled can justify the risk.

Accidental Heroes

Alternatively, PCs may be dragged into adventures by fate, even against their wills. A nomad herdsman in al-Wazif may take up arms to defend his tribe and flocks from an invader or a rampaging predator. A quiet dwarf craftsman may find himself impelled to avenge the deaths of friends in an orc raid. A peasant may be drafted into the army. An Aralaise sailor can find himself shipwrecked on a strange coast. And any wanderer can be hired for an "easy" job which turns complicated.

In general, accidental heroes start with lower point totals than professional adventurers, and it's hard to mix the two types in a PC party – the difference in motivations can be disruptive. However, a mostly-professional party may have one or two members who keep asking why they let themselves get dragged into the current mess.

Noblesse Oblige

In a medieval-style world such as Yrth, some adventurers have motives that are a mixture of those above. Members of the knightly and noble classes, and some barbarians, are often raised as warriors – trained to fight, and told that it may be their duty at some point. Many knights rarely actually use this training, spending quiet lives managing their estates. Some fight occasionally, when bandits or monsters invade their territory, or their lord calls on their feudal services. Others, such as younger sons turned knights-errant, or nobles dispossessed by a conqueror, "turn professional" to make a living.

Because people who may be obliged to fight are generally trained to do so, and given suitable equipment, they can start with decent point totals, although their skills may be less focused and honed than those of the committed professional adventurer.

Banestorm Victims

While Ytarria produces a steady supply of heroes, it also imports a few from elsewhere. Every year, across the continent, people are dropped into fields, forests, and town squares by the Banestorm. Many newcomers settle down to carve out a quiet life, or become the pawns of local factions. Some, however, by choice or necessity, become adventurers.

Banestorm victims are in a sense just more "accidental heroes," but their behavior and objectives are likely to be unusual, as are their skills. If and when they accept that their chance of getting home is effectively zero, they may still resist conforming to the local society. Many feel strongly motivated to pursue adventures, perhaps seeking to promote "anachronistic" ideas such as democracy, or to oppose the peculiar evils of Yrth, such as rampant prejudice or technophobia. They may also find themselves pursued by wizards and lords who want to imprison, interrogate, and brainwash them.

It's important to recognize that using Banestorm victims as PCs will give a campaign a *different* feel, especially if they come from 21st-century Earth. Even if these particular modern-day Earthfolk don't have the knowledge or technology to radically change the setting, they're likely to have a very different attitude from the locals, and to talk and think in a way very unlike that of the native Ytarrians. Hip, pop-culture-laden dialogue will have a major impact on the fantastical and unearthly atmosphere of the setting, and the players' ability to suspend disbelief may be completely destroyed. Hence, some GMs may choose to prohibit such characters, and even to rule that the Banestorm no longer shows any signs of activity.

Criminal vs. High-Minded PCs

While fantasy stories are often said to be about Heroes with a capital H, the fact that many of the characters of classic fantasy are less than morally perfect. Many are thieves or pirates and some are mercenary warriors (i.e., hired killers). Even "heroic" wizards may be more interested in plumbing the secrets of the universe than in using their powers for good. The archetypical fantasy PC is a treasure-hunting wanderer who breaks into intelligent creatures' lairs, slaughters the inhabitants, and flees with the loot.

On Yrth, there are plenty of opportunities for adventures at all levels of morality, amorality, or ambiguity. The PCs may be knights in shining armor, serving a legitimate and popular lord and fighting against monsters or human invaders, or high-minded outlaws, struggling against a corrupt and brutal empire. Then again, they could be self-interested knights fighting in lawless civil wars, or barbarian wanderers, happy to sell the service of their sword-arms for the price of a drink.

Playing Yourselves

If they wish, players might play, not just characters from our world, but versions of *themselves*, scooped up by the Banestorm. Unfortunately, a lot of gamers would make very poor low-tech fantasy adventurers (whatever they might like to think), but this is still an idea with possibilities.

Determining Attributes

One of the tricky aspects is producing character sheets for the new heroes. This can lead to some quite surprising displays of vanity, overconfidence, and rules misinterpretation. While some gamers are honest and modest, others will insist that they are natural-born heroes. GMs may argue with this, or let some claims slide to avoid grief – but remember, three evening classes at the dojo do not make a martial arts master, "I never catch colds" doesn't justify HT 15, and having the good taste to play ***GURPS*** doesn't prove that anyone is IQ 16.

Special Talents

Even given sensible players, the odds are that the character sheets will have a wide range of point totals. Some people are simply stronger, defter, and better educated than others. One solution, and a way to make a bunch of gamers more convincing as central figures in a heroic story, is to take the highest point total, round it up to the next multiple of 10, and then give every player the difference to spend on new abilities or advantages, somehow granted by the Banestorm itself or acquired shortly after arrival. Some might find that they have some level of Magery (never activated on low-mana Earth), while others might accidentally save someone's life shortly after arrival, thus acquiring a useful Contact, Ally, or Patron. Some might be carrying spices rare in Ytarria, or a useful piece of high-tech equipment, giving them Wealth or Signature Gear.

For a weirder benefit with fictional precedent, some mundane item which the character was wearing or carrying (a piece of jewelry, say) might suddenly display supernatural powers as a side effect of the Banestorm. For that matter, the players could find that they've been summoned to Yrth because, for some arcane reason, they're the only ones who can operate an essential magical artifact, thus saving Ytarria from an unimaginable fate . . .

Magic on Yrth

Yrth is most definitely a world with magic, from petty hedge-wizards to the schemes of dragons. Some aspects of its magical nature merit further discussion.

*Yrth actually exists within the framework of the "Infinite Worlds" setting described in the **GURPS Basic Set**, but it isn't easy to reach . . . and it's far harder to escape.*

Magical Inter-World Games

Yrth is designed as a setting for reasonably conventional fantasy stories, which tend to be limited to single worlds (plus the occasional ancillary hell-dimension or pocket realm); those spells in ***GURPS Magic*** which permit interdimensional adventuring don't work too well here (p. 26). If they were effective and available to PCs, they would probably transform the campaign into a series of cross-timeline adventures, in which the primary form of transport happened to be magical rather than technological. Yrth would be reduced from a campaign setting to a mere home base for occasional visits.

However, some GMs might *like* this idea, or at least might want a few powerful NPCs around the edges of the story with access to realms beyond Yrth. In that case, transdimensional gate-magics will still be great secrets; PCs would have to have Unusual Backgrounds to start play knowing them. Such spells might also represent the cutting edge of thaumaturgical research, with low reliability and high uncertainty. Casual users could end up *anywhere* – or *nowhere*. Factions who *might* have some use of such spells include the Dark Elves (p. 18), the Templars (p. 63), the djinn (p. 174), and some very ancient and enigmatic dragons (p. 226). All would have their own reasons for keeping them secret. If taken as a Patron, an NPC with reliable use of gate-magics *definitely* has "Special Abilities."

GURPS Infinite Worlds has more on multi-dimensional adventuring, including discussion of magically-based campaigns. Yrth actually exists within the framework of the "Infinite Worlds" setting described in the ***GURPS Basic Set,*** but it isn't easy to reach . . . and it's far harder to escape.

Changing the World

This book presents a picture of Yrth at a particular date, with many great forces and conflicts in motion. But, it's the mark of true heroes that their actions *make a difference;* they can and do change the world.

Powerful, high-status characters who lead armies in wartime will by definition change the setting's history, whether by winning or by losing. Low-fantasy "street" adventurers can generally only change things if they stumble into some great (and dangerous) espionage or assassination plot. The situation in Ytarria has many potential flashpoints. The death of a major figure in the Caithness civil war, the exposure of the truth about the Emperor of Megalos, or a great war between orcs and other races in the far west . . . any of these could shake things up spectacularly.

GMs or ambitious PCs might set up entirely *new* world-shaking plots with scope for PC involvement. Contact with another continent, the adoption of gunpowder by a major power, a major resurgence of the Banestorm, or another Dark Elf scheme against the "lesser races" could all leave the setting radically rewritten.

That said, it's worth noting that reshaping a society, let alone a continent full of quarreling societies, should take time and preparation. Changing the world is an issue for a campaign, not a single scenario.

Epilogue: The Future of Yrth

This book's "present day" corresponds to our own world's present at the time of publication. But time must move forward, on Yrth as on Earth.

So history will continue, and things will change. Conflicts such as the Caithness Civil War will come to a resolution some day, and secrets such as the Demon Emperor will probably be exposed eventually. In broader terms, technological progress isn't completely suppressed on Ytarria, despite many people's best efforts. And then there are the interlocked issues of the growing Blackwoods and the schemes of the Dark Elves.

In the medium term, the big issue is, as ever, Megalos. The Empire is in decline, rotting from within, harassed from without, but it's still the greatest power on Ytarria, still convinced that it's destined to rule, and still well organized for conquest. The Empire's leaders may well indulge in military adventurism to distract its people from their problems. Furthermore, its neighbors are divided. Caithness is torn by civil war, al-Wazif has tried its own first strike and failed, al-Haz suffers from plague and dissension, Cardiel is more an alliance than a country, and the dwarves seem likely to keep to themselves.

Indeed, one epic, world-changing campaign theme might be organizing the grand Alliance Against the Dragon. If the Demon Emperor is exposed, or if Megalos acquires too many frontier dukes with dreams of glory, the only way to stop the Empire may be to persuade the other nations to put aside their differences and agree on a combined strategy. (Ambitious PCs might also think of promoting independence for Araterre, crippling Megalan naval strength.)

In the longer term, Yrth in 2005 is no more safe from change than was Earth in 1905. Despite its cultural conservatism, new technologies, ideas, and crops are slipping in from Earth, the science of magic is advancing, and the population is growing. The feudal, medieval societies of Ytarria are probably in their long sunset; what they will change into is impossible to predict. There may be new ideals and new dimensions, as well as new technologies to explore. The future is *not* fixed.

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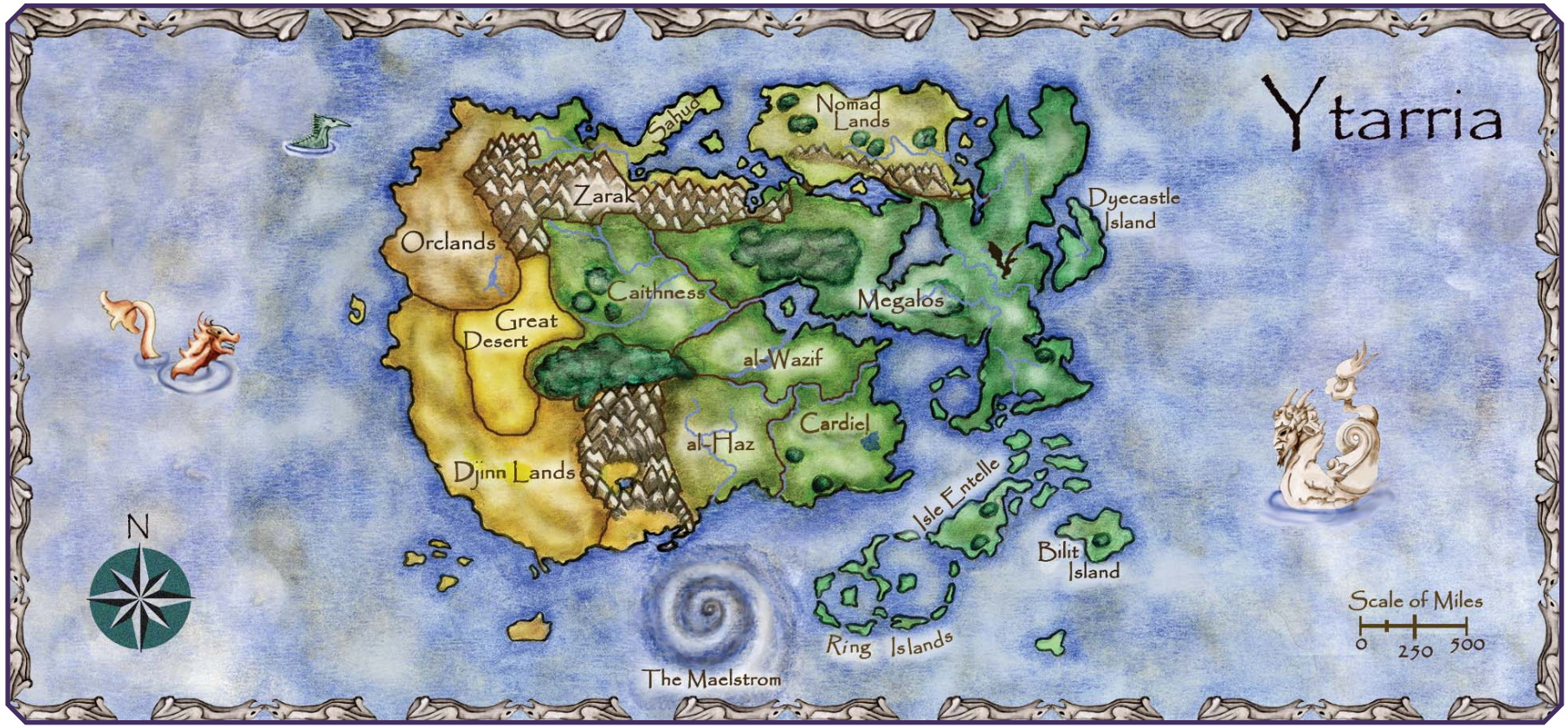

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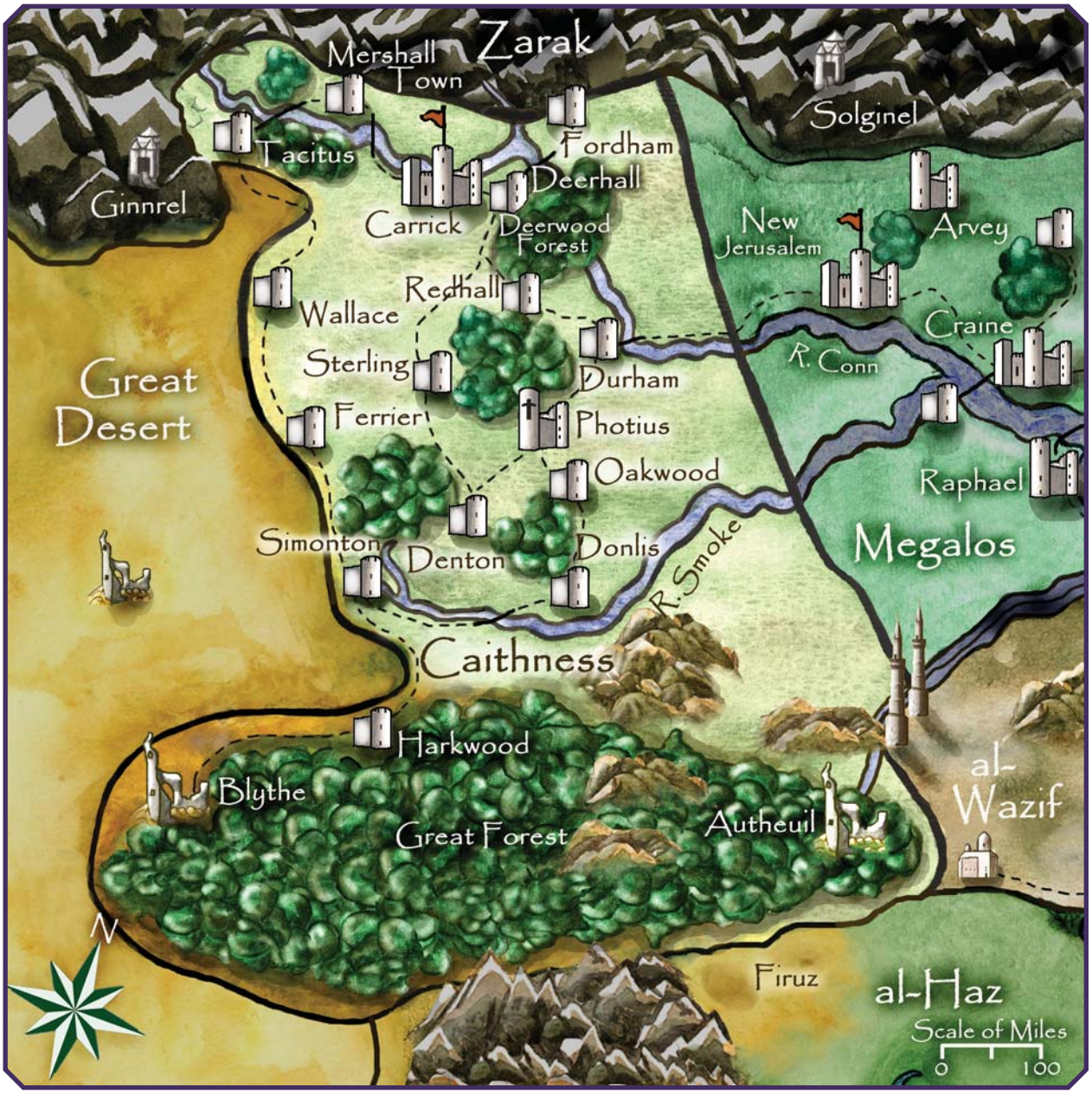

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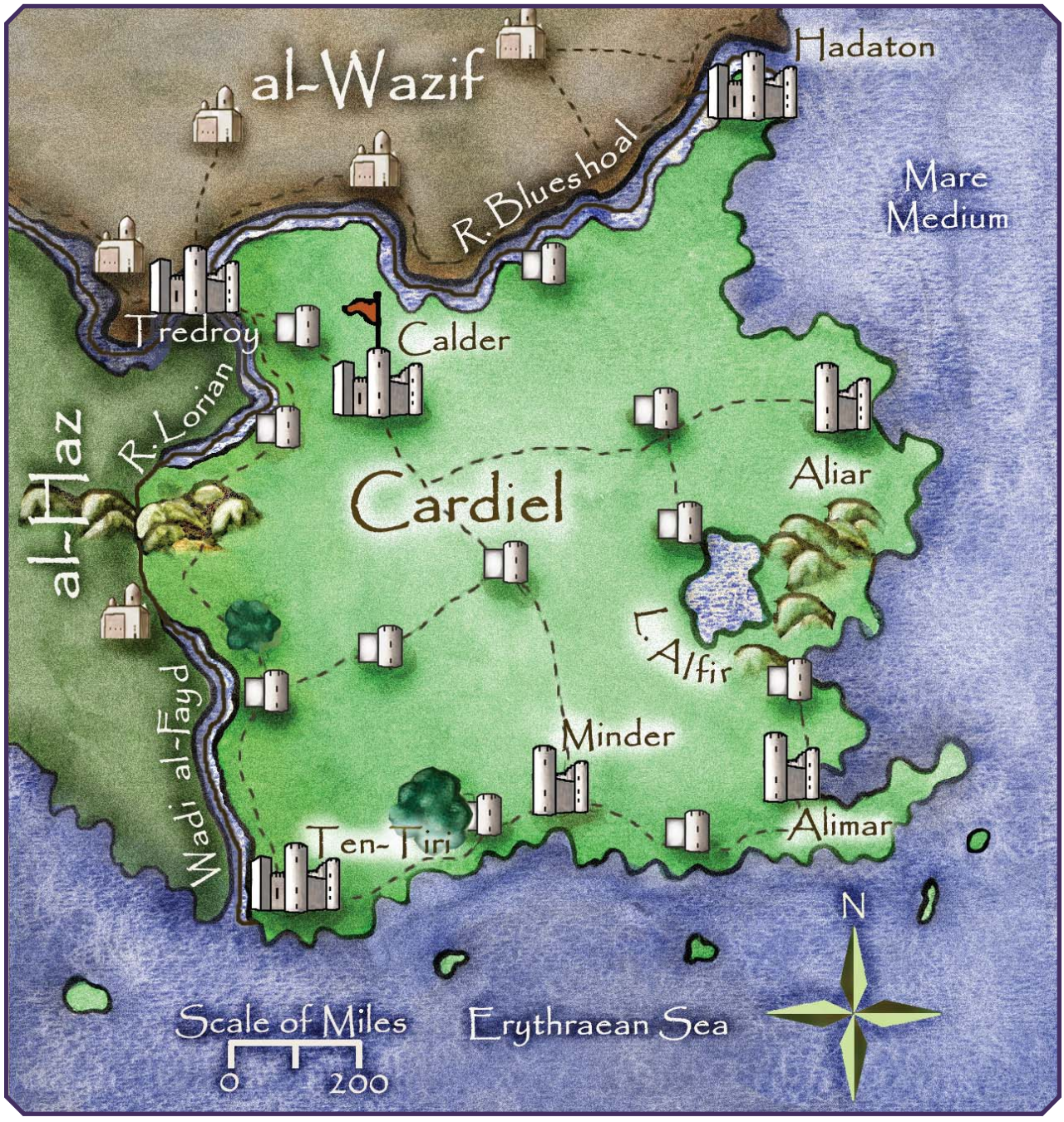

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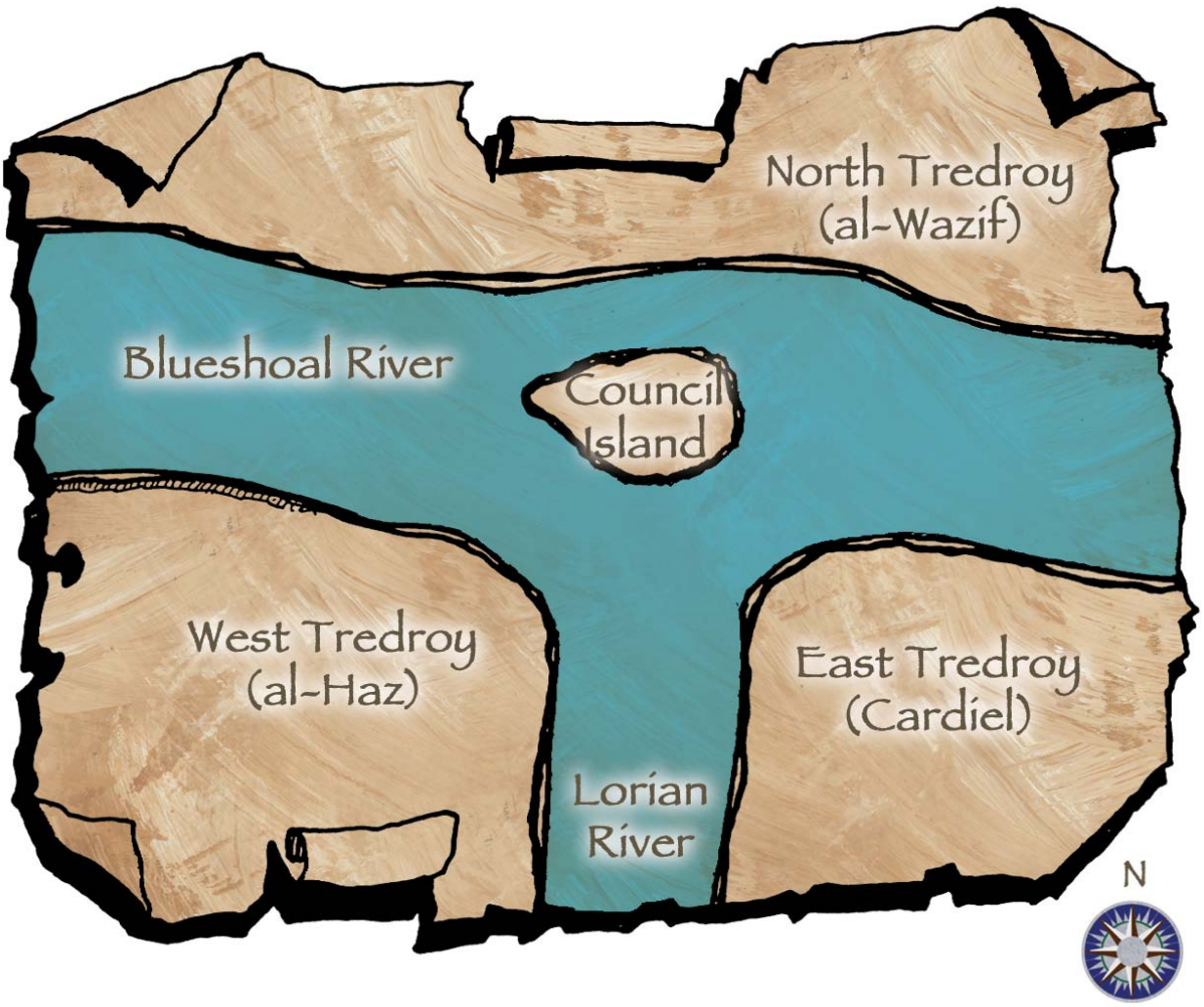

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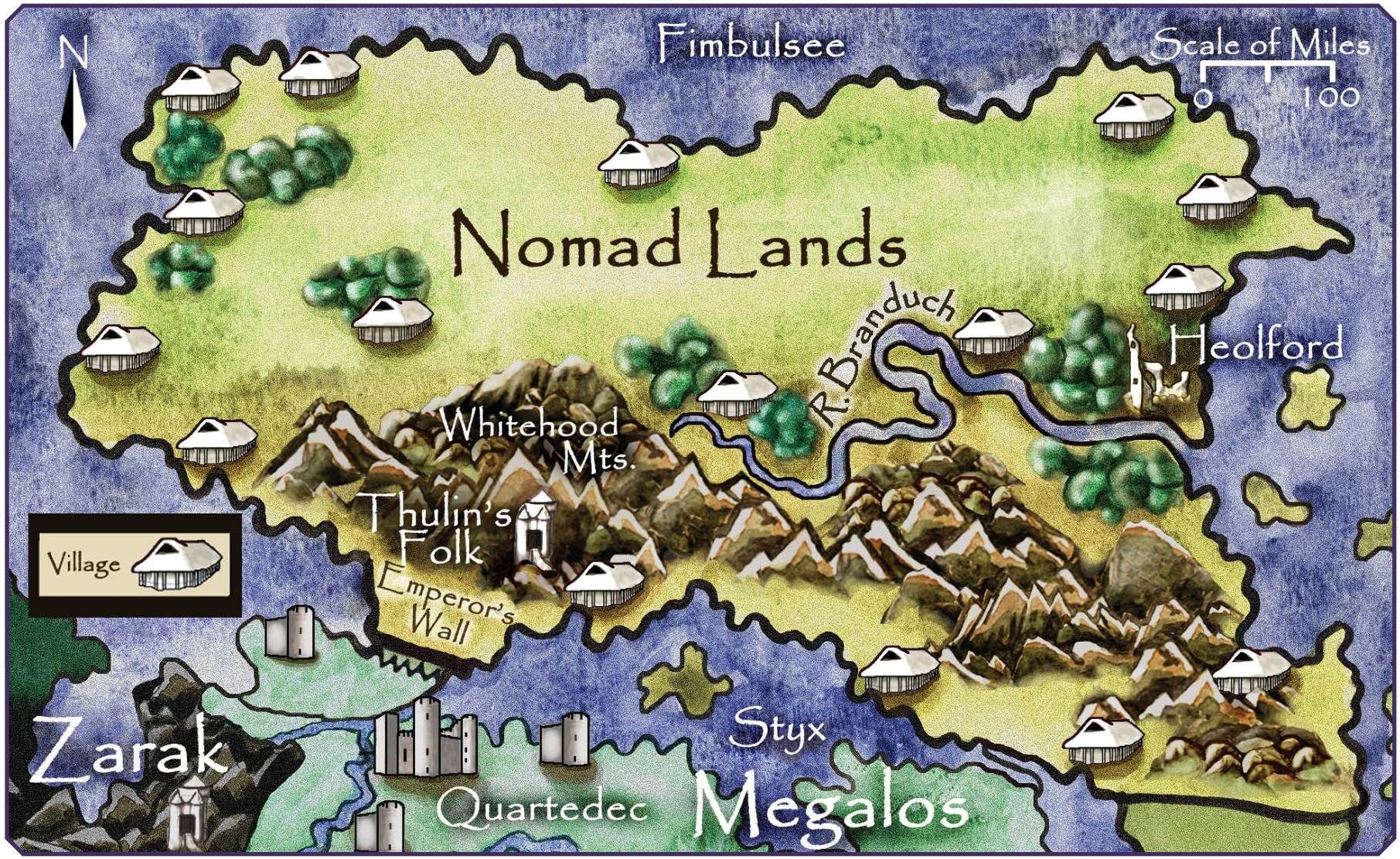

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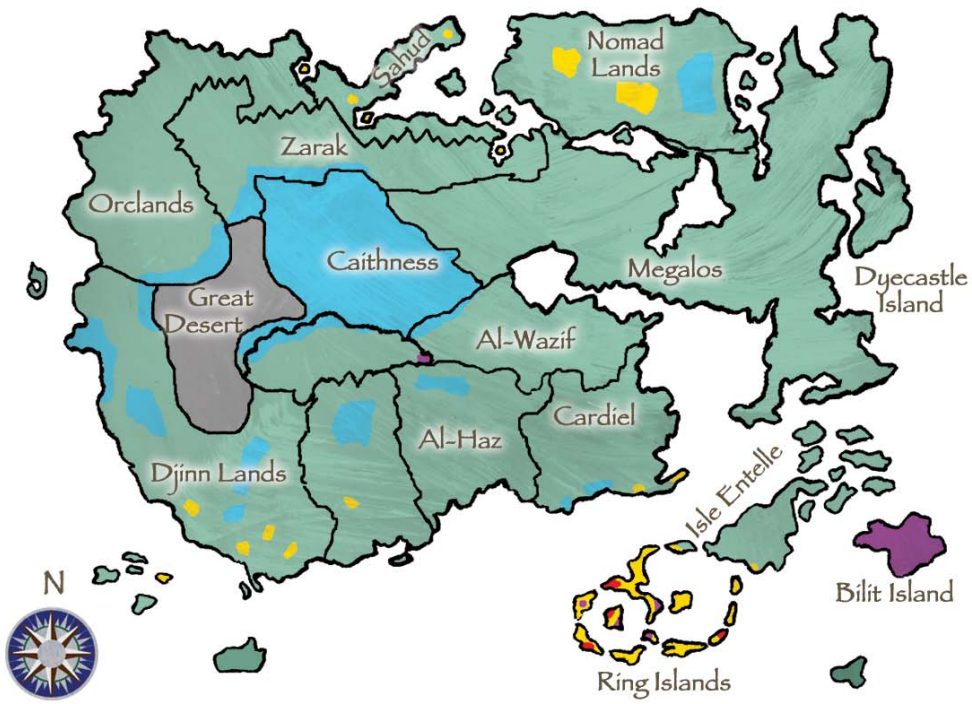
Mana Levels Across Ytarria



Most of Ytarria has normal mana, with the exception of Caithness (low mana), the Great Desert (no mana), Bilit Island (variable), and the Ring Islands (mostly high, with very high and variable spots). Large spots of high and low mana are found elsewhere, as shown.

This map has more information than (probably) any one person in Ytarria would possess, but the wizards in each area would recognize it as correct for their area. The GM, of course, is free to make changes, or to have very authoritative NPC advisers disagree with the information here as it relates to distant lands.

Only major features are shown. The red dots representing the high-mana spots in Sahud are exaggerated to make them visible, as is the purple dot representing Authiel in the Great Forest. There are many, many small areas across the continent where the mana varies from the prevailing level, such as the spots around djinn castles (p. 176); the GM may create these to fit the campaign.

For clarity, only land areas are colored. Lakes and coastal oceans generally have the mana level of the adjacent land; the mana level over the deep oceans is mostly low, with some areas of no mana and some of changeable mana. See p. 178.

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